ICCT International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague

Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review

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Based on an in-depth literature review, ICCT Visiting Research Fellow Dr. Alex P. Schmid explores the terms 'radicalisation', 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation' and the discourses surrounding them. Much of the literature on radicalisation focuses on Islamist extremism and jihadist terrorism. This is also reflected in this Research Paper which explores the relationship between radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. Historically, 'radicalism' – contrary to 'extremism' – does not necessarily have negative connotations, nor is it a synonym for terrorism. Schmid argues that both extremism and radicalism can only be properly assessed in relation to what is mainstream political thought in a given period. The paper further explores what we know well and what we know less well about radicalisation. It proposes to explore radicalisation not only on the micro-level of 'vulnerable individuals' but also on the meso-level of the 'radical milieu' and the macro-level of 'radicalising public opinion and political parties'. The author reconceptualises radicalisation as a process that can occur on both sides of conflict dyads and challenges several widespread assumptions. The final section examines various counter-radicalisation and deradicalisation programmes. It concludes with a series of policy recommendations.

About the Author

Dr. Alex P. Schmid is a Visiting Research Fellow at ICCT – The Hague and Director of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), an international network of scholars who seek to enhance human security through collaborative research. He was co-editor of the journal Terrorism and Political Violence and is currently editor-in-chief of Perspectives on Terrorism, the online journal of TRI. Dr. Schmid held a chair in International Relations at the University of St. Andrews where he was, until 2009, also Director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV). From 1999 to 2005 he was Officer-in-Charge of the Terrorism Prevention Branch at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the rank of a Senior Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer. From 1994 to 1999, Dr. Schmid was an elected member of the Executive Board of ISPAC (International Scientific and Professional Advisory Council) of the United Nations' Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme. Until 1999 he held the position of Extraordinary

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The terms 'radicalisation', 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation' are used widely, but the search for what exactly 'radicalisation' is, what causes it and how to 'de-radicalise' those who are considered radicals, violent extremists or terrorists has so far been a frustrating experience. The popularity of the concept of 'radicalisation' stands in no direct relationship to its actual explanatory power regarding the root causes of terrorism. In Europe, it was brought into the academic discussion after the bomb attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) by policymakers who coined the term 'violent radicalisation'. It has become a political shibboleth despite its lack of precision.

Historical Roots and Definitions
Based on an in-depth literature review, this paper seeks to explore key terms and the discourses surrounding them in greater detail. Much of the literature on radicalisation focuses on Islamist extremism and jihadist terrorism and this is also reflected in this Research Paper. Looking at the historical roots of radicalism, the subject is a relative one and has often been a force of progress. As such, its derivative, 'radicalisation' is not necessarily a synonym for terrorism. The paper proposes a distinction between radicalism and extremism. While both stand at some distance from mainstream political thinking, the first tends to be open-minded, while the second manifests a closed mind and a distinct willingness to use violence against civilians. A re-conceptualisation of radicalisation is proposed after a discussion of numerous academic and governmental definitions of radicalisation.

The Two Sides of Radicalisation
The paper also seeks to differentiate between terrorism and other forms of political violence – some worse and some less unacceptable than terrorism itself. It acknowledges that there are certain forms of violent resistance to political oppression that, while illegal under certain national laws, are accepted under international humanitarian law. For analytical purposes, political violence should be situated in the broader spectrum of political action – persuasive politics, pressure politics and violent politics – by those holding state power as well as non-state militant actors. With this in mind it should also be recognised that radicalisation is not necessarily a one-sided phenomenon, it is equally important to examine the role of state actors and their potential for radicalisation. The use of torture techniques and extra-judicial renditions in recent years, has been a drastic departure from democratic rule of law procedures and international human rights standards. These are indicative of the fact that in a polarised political situation not only non-state actors but also state actors can radicalise.

Drivers of Radicalisation
An exploration of the literature also confirms the pitfalls of profiling those individuals 'likely' to become terrorists. The current propensity to focus in the search for causes of radicalisation on 'vulnerable' young people has produced inconclusive results. The number of push and pull factors that can lead to radicalisation on this microlevel is very large – the same is true for the factors which can impact on de-radicalisation and disengagement. However, in the literature most findings are derived from small samples and few case studies, making comparison and generalisations problematic, and findings provisional. The paper pleads to look for roots of radicalisation beyond this micro-level and include a focus on the meso-level – the radical milieu – and the macro-level – the radicalisation of public opinion and party politics – to gain a better understanding of the dynamic processes driving escalation. The paper synthesises what we think we know about radicalisation and identifies those areas where our knowledge is 'thin'.

Conclusions
When it comes to de-radicalisation/dis-engagement and counter-radicalisation the paper concludes that it is difficult to identify what works and what does not work in general, or what is even counter-productive. Local context matters very much and academics and policy makers alike are increasingly recognising this fact. At this stage we still lack rigorous evaluations that allow us to determine the relative merits of various policies with a high degree of certainty. The lack of clarity and consensus with regard to many key concepts (terrorism, radicalisation, extremism, etc.) – ill-defined and yet taken for granted – still present an obstacle that needs to be overcome. The paper concludes with a set of findings and recommendations and identifies two major gaps in current counter-radicalisation efforts – one referring to the role of the media and the Internet and the other to the role of counter-

narratives to those of jihadist terrorists. It identifies credibility and legitimacy as core ingredients of any political narrative hoping to catch the imagination of people at home and abroad. They are key resources in counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism. Governments need not be perfect before they can effectively engage in successful de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation efforts. However, they have, in the eyes of domestic and foreign publics, to be markedly better than extremist parties and terrorist organisations.

Preface

This International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) Research Paper has its origin in a paper I originally presented at the World Summit on Counter-Terrorism in Herzliya, Israel, in September 2011. That plenary address has been much expanded and updated for ICCT, both in the opening sections and in the latter part. This accounts for its somewhat unusual structure. The main purpose of this Research Paper is to stimulate discussion and re-thinking in the interdisciplinary field of terrorism studies.

      Much of the literature on radicalisation focuses on Islamist extremism and jihadist terrorism and this onesidedness is also, to a considerable extent, reflected in this Research Paper. However, this focus reflects a major part of contemporary reality: in recent years, violent Sunni extremists have been responsible for the largest number of terrorists attacks worldwide. In 2011, for instance, Sunni extremists were responsible for 56% of over 10,000 attacks worldwide and for about 70% of all deaths resulting from non-state terrorism.[1]

      This paper is meant to stimulate discussion and re-thinking about one of the most widely used concepts in the field of terrorism studies – 'radicalisation' – and its derivatives 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation'. Progress in any field depends on critical reflection and this paper contains not only criticism of my own, but also summarises some of the criticism of others. This includes often leading scholars in the field, like my former

colleague from the University of St. Andrews, Dr. John Horgan (now Director of the International Centre for the Study of Terrorism at the Pennsylvania State University) or my former PhD student Tore Bjørgo (now Professor at the Norwegian Police University College) as well as members of the European Commission's former Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation (2006-2008) of which I was also part.[2] I would also like to express my gratitude to the participants of a Roundtable organised by ICCT on 18 January 2013.[3] This gathering brought together some of the most prominent researchers in the field and while not all of them could concur with all the definitions, findings and recommendations of this Working Paper, the sense of the meeting confirmed the general thrust of my conclusions. I am grateful for all their comments and ideas. While all of these inputs enriched this study, and while it is also written under the auspices of ICCT, the responsibility for the content of this Paper rests with the author alone.

In terms of methodology, this is mainly a literature review with occasional references to conceptualisation issues, including this author's own definitional work. As mentioned above, there is a strong emphasis on Islamist radicalisation. Covering right-wing, left-wing, ethno-nationalist, anarchist and single issue radicalisation would no doubt have increased the scope and validity of the findings but was beyond the ambit of this particular review. This is not to deny or downplay the importance of other (non-religious) forms of radicalisation. Bringing all these forms of radicalisation under one theoretical model or theory is a challenge that has so far eluded us; it is difficult enough to reach a modicum of agreement on Islamist radicalisation.

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In terms of fatalities: According to the World Incidents Tracking System of the US National Counter Terrorism Center, out of 12,533 deaths in 2011 caused by terrorism, Neo-Nazi/Fascists and White Supremacists were responsible for 77 deaths, Secular/Political/Anarchist perpetrators for 1,926 deaths and Sunni Extremists for 8,886 deaths (with the remaining fatalities falling under the categories 'Unknown' (1,519) or 'other' (170) in terms of background of perpetrators. National Counterterrorism Center, *Terrorism in 2011* (Washington, DC: NCTC, 2012), p. 11. [2]
For its composition and report 'Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism' (Brussels, 15 May 2008), see Appendix in Rik Coolsaet (Ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences*, 2nd edition, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 269-287. [3]
Participants included Dr. Omar Ashour, Prof. Dr. Tore Bjørgo, Prof. Dr. Clark McCauley, Prof. Dr. Peter Neumann, Mr. Petter Nesser, Prof. Dr. Andrew Silke, Prof. Dr. Anne Speckhard and Dr. Lorenzo Vidino, as well as various Dutch experts and ICCT Fellows. For more information see http://www.icct.nl/activities/past-events/radicalisation-de-radicalisation-and-counter-radicalisation

Introduction

The terms 'radicalisation' and 'de-radicalisation' are used widely, but the search for what exactly 'radicalisation' is, what causes it and how to 'de-radicalise' those who are considered radicals, violent extremists or terrorists, is a frustrating experience. One literature survey found, for instance, that 'The causes of radicalisation are as diverse as they are abundant'.[1] Rik Coolsaet, a Belgian expert who was part of an Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation established by the European Commission to study the problem, recently described the very notion of radicalisation as 'ill-defined, complex and controversial'.[2] An Australian team of authors concluded that 'About the only thing that radicalisation experts agree on is that radicalisation is a process. Beyond that there is considerable variation as to make existing research incomparable.'[6]

The popularity of the concept of 'radicalisation' stands in no direct relationship to its actual explanatory power regarding the root causes of terrorism. It was brought into the academic discussion after the bomb attacks in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005 by European policymakers who coined the term 'violent radicalisation'. It has become a political shibboleth despite its lack of precision.[3] Arun Kundnani comments:

> Since 2004, the term 'radicalisation' has become central to terrorism studies and counterterrorism policy-making. As US and European governments have focused on stemming 'homegrown' Islamist political violence, the concept of radicalisation has become the master signifier of the late 'war on terror' and provided a new lens through which to view Muslim minorities. The introduction of policies designed to 'counter-radicalise' has been accompanied by the emergence of a government-funded industry of advisers, analysts, scholars, entrepreneurs and self-appointed community representatives who claim that their knowledge of a theological or psychological radicalisation process enables them to propose interventions in Muslim communities to prevent extremism.[4]

If the very concept of radicalisation itself is problematic, the same must – by extension – also be true for 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation' – terms that are 'poorly defined and mean different things to different people' as the International Crisis Group noted in one of its reports.[5] If this is true, further progress in de-radicalisation efforts and counter-radicalisation initiatives is impeded by a fuzzy conceptualisation of the core concept. Much of the present investigation is therefore devoted to address and clarify conceptual issues related to 'radicalisation', 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation'.

The literature on (de-) radicalisation is young. The majority of publications are from the last decade, especially from the last eight years, triggered in part by a 'blowback' reaction to the US-led intervention to overthrow Saddam Hussein in 2003 – an intervention not authorised by the United Nations' (UN) Security Council that angered many Muslims in the Middle East and the West.[6] Most of the literature focuses on Islamist radicalisation, especially in the West, which is de facto reflected in this paper . The majority of studies describe

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[1] COT, *Radicalisation*, *Recruitment and the EU Counter-radicalisation Strategy*, (The Hague: COT, 17 November 2008), p. 11.

[2] Rik Coolsaet (Ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experience,* 2nd edition (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 240. [6]

  Minerva Nasser-Eddine, Bridget Garnham, Katerina Agostino and Gilbert Caluya, *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review* (Canberra: Australian Government, Department of Defence March 2011), p. 13.

[3] There are two confusions contained in the term 'violent radicalisation': (i) what is meant is not 'radicalisation by violence' but 'radicalisation to violence'; (ii) and, in addition, the reference is not to 'violence' in general but to a specific type of political violence, namely terrorist violence against civilians and non-combatants. What is generally meant is 'radicalisation as an individual or group process of growing commitment to engage in acts of political terrorism'.

[4] Arun Kundnani, 'Radicalisation: the journey of a concept', *Race & Class*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Oct.-Dec. 2012), p. 3.

[5] International Crisis Group, 'De-radicalisation and Indonesian Prisons', *Asia Report,* No. 142 (19 November 2007), p. i. United Nations. Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, *First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism: Inventory of State Programmes*, (New York: UN/CTITF, September 2008), p. 5.

[6] In fact, Eliza Manningham-Buller, Director General of MI5 between 2002 and 2007 told a parliamentary enquiry in 2010: 'Our involvement in Iraq radicalised, for want of a better word, a whole generation of young people – not a whole generation, a few among a generation – who saw our involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan as being an attack on Islam'. See also Akil N. Awan, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O' Loughlin, *Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

radicalisation and recruitment processes while studies on de-radicalisation, disengagement and counterradicalisation are fewer and of more recent origin.[7] What has been notably absent in most of the writings of those who now plough the field of (counter-) terrorism studies with regard to radicalisation to political violence in general, and terrorism in particular, has been some soul-searching in one's own history. In none of the studies on radicalisation and de-radicalisation surveyed, could discussions of apparently obvious questions be found, like, 'how did the radicalisation that led to the American revolution come about?' or 'how was the 'de-nazification' (de-radicalisation) of Germany achieved after the Second World War?'.

Radicalisation Studies as Part of the Search for the Root Causes of Terrorism

The focus on radicalisation since 2004/05 is a welcome one since it is part of the long-neglected search for the root causes of terrorism. Politicians have come up with a great variety of alleged causes of radicalisation's presumed end product – terrorism. In October 2001, spokespersons from some 170 states commented on the events of 11 September 2001 in the UN General Assembly in speech after speech for a full week. Blame for these terrorist attacks was placed in many baskets. Here is a sample of the alleged root causes:

- Communities struck by *poverty*, disease, illiteracy, bitter hopelessness (Armenia);
- Social *inequality*, marginalization and exclusion (Benin);
- Political oppression, extreme poverty and the *violation of basic rights* (Costa Rica);
- *Injustices*, misery, starvation, drugs, exclusion, prejudices, despair for lack of perspectives (Dominican Republic);
- *Oppression* of peoples in several parts of the world, particularly in Palestine (Malaysia);
- *Alienation* of the young in situations of economic deprivation and political tension and uncertainty, sense of injustice and lack of hope (New Zealand);
- *Rejection of the West* with all its cultural dimensions (Palestine);
- Hunger, poverty, deprivation, fear, *despair*, absence of sense of belonging to the human family (Namibia);
- Situations which lead to misery, exclusion, reclusion, the injustices which lead to growing *frustration*, desperation and exasperation (Senegal).[8]

Few of these 'causes' of the 9/11 terrorist attacks have been empirically tested. It would appear that these explanations often say more about the speakers and their governments' ideologies than about the terrorists' intentions and motivations. Representatives of Western countries have, in their speeches to the UN General Assembly, generally avoided engaging in a discussion of root causes, emphasising instead the criminal and inexcusable character of the 9/11 attacks.[9]

Academic researchers also found it hard to agree on root causes of terrorism in general. The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research identified more than 50 different alleged 'causes'. Here is a small sample (not specifically relating to 9/11):

- Terrorism is rooted in *political discontent*;

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[7] Laurie Fenstermacher, 'Executive Summary', in Sarah Canna (Ed.), *Countering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods & Strategies* (Washington DC: NSI, September 2011), p. 14.

[8] Defining Terrorism & its Root Causes. References to the definition of terrorism and the root causes as discussed in the United Nations General Assembly debate 'Measures to eliminate international terrorism', 1 – 5 October, 2001, United Nations, New York. Italics added by author.

[9] Personal recollection of the author who listened to most of these speeches as Officer-in-Charge of the UNODC's Terrorism Prevention Branch.

- A culture of *alienation and humiliation* can act as a kind of growth medium in which the process of radicalisation commences and virulent extremism comes to thrive;
- A collective or individual *desire for revenge* against acts of repression may be motive enough for terrorist activity;
- The failure to mobilize popular support for a radical political program may trigger the decision to employ terrorism in order to engineer a violent confrontation with the authorities;
- Modern terrorism occurs because modern circumstances make terrorist methods exceptionally easy;
- The choice of terrorism represents the outcome of a learning process from own experiences and the experiences of others.[10]

While some of these academic explanations are, in the view of this writer, somewhat closer to the mark than many of those offered by speakers in the General Assembly in October 2001, most of these propositions or 'theories' have never been investigated in a rigorous way. In fact, it would be hard to test some of them, as they are based on very general formulations (like 'modern circumstances', or 'the culture of alienation').

What has been remarkably absent in the halls of government, as well as in much of academia, is listening the explanations of some of the terrorists themselves. After all, they believe they have a theory or method that 'works' – otherwise they would hardly be engaging in mass casualty attacks on non-combatants to begin with. Here is, for instance, a statement of an analyst close to al-Qaeda regarding the 'Manhattan raid' of 11 September 2001:

> […] al-Qaeda has, and always had, a specific aim: to arouse the sleeping body of the Islamic Nation – a billion Muslims worldwide – to fight against Western power and the contaminations of Western culture. In support of this aim, the 9/11 attacks were designed 'to force the Western snake to bite the sleeping body, and wake it up.[15]

Such a chilling, strategic, rational choice explanation (while by no means the whole truth regarding the rationale underlying the 9/11 attacks) comes like a whiff of cold air and indicates at the very least that root causes of terrorism ought to be investigated on various levels of analysis.

Micro, Meso- and Macro-Levels of Analysis

The study of root causes was for a long time considered to be politically incorrect in many Western government quarters. Peter Neumann, Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) in London, states:

> Following the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 […] it suddenly became very difficult to talk about 'the roots of terrorism' which some commentators claimed was an effort to excuse and justify the killing of innocent civilians […] It was through the notion of radicalisation that a discussion […] became possible again.[11]

The drawback of such a bow to political correctness, however, has been that the focus of most government-sponsored research has been very much on 'vulnerable' youths who have somehow been 'radicalised' and recruited by terrorist organisations and turned into killers. Some of whom are even ready not just to risk, but to sacrifice their own lives in addition to the lives of innocent civilians in their effort to push the terrorist grievances and demands

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[10] A.P. Schmid (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 272-79, italics added by author. [15] Saif Allah (pseudonym), Jihadi Analyst on Risalat al-Umma forum (2005); Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalisation Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), p. 157.

[11] Peter R. Neumann, op cit. in M. Sedgwick, 'The Concept of Radicalisation as a Source of Confusion', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2010), p. 480.

on the political agenda. Such a micro-level and person-centred approach deflects attention from the role of a wider spectrum of factors, including the generally repressive policies of many governments in the countries of origin of radicalised young men and Arab and Muslim perceptions regarding the intentions and policies of the United States (US).

Causes for radicalisation that can lead to terrorism ought to be sought not just on the micro-level but also on meso- and macro-levels:

1. *Micro-level*, i.e. the individual level, involving e.g. identity problems, failed integration, feelings of alienation, marginalisation, discrimination, relative deprivation, humiliation (direct or by proxy), stigmatisation and rejection, often combined with moral outrage and feelings of (vicarious) revenge;

2. *Meso-level*, i.e. the wider radical milieu – the supportive or even complicit social surround – which serves as a rallying point and is the 'missing link' with the terrorists' broader constituency or reference group that is aggrieved and suffering injustices which, in turn, can radicalise parts of a youth cohort and lead to the formation of terrorist organisations; [12]

3. *Macro-level*, i.e. role of government and society at home and abroad, the radicalisation of public opinion and party politics, tense majority – minority relationships, especially when it comes to foreign diasporas, and the role of lacking socio-economic opportunities for whole sectors of society which leads to mobilisation and radicalisation of the discontented, some of which might take the form of terrorism.[13]

The first and still dominant approach explores mainly how presumably 'vulnerable' individuals in the West (often second and third generation Muslim immigrants or Middle Eastern students) are socialised ideologically and psychologically by terrorist propaganda and/or recruiters of terrorist organisations.[14] The second approach stresses more what is going on in the enabling environment – the radical milieu – or, more narrowly, in an underground organisation which offers those willing to join the thrills of adventure and the comfort of comradeship within a brotherhood.[15] The third level of analysis deals *inter alia* with government actions at home and abroad and society's relationship with members of minorities, especially diaspora migrants, who are caught between two cultures, leading some to rebel against the very society that hosts them.[16] While there is some uncertainty as to what should belong to the meso- and what to the macro-level, research on these levels is clearly deserving more attention compared to the current preponderance of micro-level research. Writing from a British perspective, Kundnani also noted:

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[12] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 115.

[13] The concept of a 'radical milieu' has been introduced by Peter Waldmann and Stefan Malthaner in 2010. They were the first to argue that radicalisation is (also) 'the result of political and social processes that involve a collectivity of people beyond the terrorist group itself and cannot be understood in isolation. Even if their violent campaign necessitates clandestine forms of operation, most terrorist groups remain connected to a radical milieu to recruit new members and because they depend on shelter and assistance given by this supportive milieu, without which they are unable to evade persecution and to carry out violent attacks [...] Sharing core elements of the terrorists' perspective and political experiences, the radical milieu provides political and moral support'. Stefan Malthaner, *The Radical Milieu*, (Bielefeld: Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung (IKG), November 2010), p. 1; see also Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann (Eds.), *Radikale Milieus. Das soziale Umfeld terroristischer Gruppen* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2012).

[14] Mathieu Guidere and Nicole Morgan, *Le manuel de recrutement d'Al-Qaïda* (Paris: Seuil, 2007).

[15] Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann (Eds.), *Radikale Milieus* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2012); Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). It has often been assumed that radicalisation precedes recruitment but there have also been cases where recruitment comes first and is followed by radicalisation. Magnus Ranstorp, 'Introduction' in 'Understanding Violent Radicalisation', Magnus Ranstorp (Ed.), *Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 7. When it comes to de-radicalisation, John Horgan (and others like Tore Bjørgo) found that in many cases disengagement from a terrorist organisation antedates ideological distancing from the philosophy of terrorism. J. Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of disengagements from radical and extremist movements* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

[16] Peter Waldmann, *Radikalisierung in der Diaspora: Wie Islamisten im Westen zu Terroristen werden* (Hamburg: Murmann-Verlag, 2009).

On the other hand, the meso-level question, as to what conditions are likely to increase or decrease the legitimacy of the use of particular types of violence for a particular political actor (either a social movement or a state), is amenable to productive analysis. So, too, is the macrolevel question of how particular social movements and states are constituted to be in conflict with each other, and how the interaction between these different political actors produces a context in which violence becomes acceptable. This relational aspect requires us to investigate the ways in which western states themselves 'radicalised' following 9/11 as much as non-state actors, both becoming more willing to use violence in a wider range of contexts. An objective study would examine how state and non-state actors mutually constitute themselves as combatants in a global conflict between 'the West' and 'radical Islam' and address under what conditions each chooses to adopt tactics of violence, paying close attention to the relationship between the legitimising frameworks of the various actors. Only by analysing the interaction between the different parties in the conflict and how each interprets the other's actions is it possible to explain why the number of incidents of home-grown terrorist violence increased dramatically in Europe following the launch of the Iraq war.[22]

Each of the three levels of analysis can bring us closer to answers about the socio-psychological causes of radicalisation, socialisation, mobilisation to terrorism and related processes of engagement and escalation. Most research points in the direction that there is no single cause but a complex mix of internal and external pull and push factors, triggers and drivers that can lead to radicalisation of individuals and even turn large collective groups into radical milieus and violent extremists.[23] Macro- and meso-level contextual factors may play a similar or an even larger role than individual and small group factors in the overall radicalisation processes.[24] The multitude of factors that contribute to radicalisation towards political violence in general and terrorism in particular, however, raises – as indicated already – the question whether existing conceptualisations are not (also) part of the problem. Research so far has concentrated very much on the micro-level; more research on the meso- level – the level of the radical milieu and radicalised whole communities – is needed. The same applies to the macro-level, which is politically more sensitive since it involves also the study of interactions of Western governments with authoritarian and repressive regimes in the Middle East and beyond.

A number of analyses have observed that the study of radicalisation on the micro-level has, to some extent, become a substitute for a fuller exploration of the causes of violent extremism and terrorism. Mark Sedgwick argues that, '[s]o long as the circumstances that produce Islamist radicals' declared grievances are not taken into account, it is inevitable that the Islamist radical will often appear as a 'rebel without a cause'.[25] It appears that by excluding potentially politically awkward factors like 'counter-productive counter-terrorism' from research – especially government-funded research – too much weight has been put on the 'radicalisation' of individuals and the micro-level as an explanatory variable. Kundnani even claims that:

The result is a systematic failure to address the reality of the political conflicts that radicalisation scholars claim they want to understand. Instead, a concept has been contrived which builds into official thinking biases and prejudices that, in turn, structure government practices introduced to combat radicalisation, resulting in discrimination and unwarranted restrictions on civil liberties.[26]

Although this may go too far, a critical review of some of the key concepts in the immediate surroundings of radicalisation and radicalisation itself can only be helpful. This will be attempted in the following sections.

Reviewing the Concepts of Radicalism, Extremism, Terrorism and Radicalisation

What is actually meant by 'radicalisation'? There is no universally accepted definition in academia or government. The concept of radicalisation is by no means as solid and clear as many seem to take for granted. Above all, it cannot be understood on its own. The Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation established by the European Commission in 2006, tasked to analyse the state of academic research on radicalisation to violence, in particular terrorism, noted

in 2008 that '[r]adicalisation is a context-bound phenomenon par excellence. Global, sociological and political drivers matter as much as ideological and psychological ones'.[27] This expert group utilised a concise working definition of violent radicalisation, 'socialization to extremism which manifests itself in terrorism'.[28]

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   Arun Kundnani (2012), op. cit. (note 8), p. 20. 23
   Ashild Kjok, Thomas Hegghammer, Annika Hansen and Jorgen Kjetil Knudson, *Restoring Peace or Provoking Terrorism? Exploring the Links Between Multilateral Military Intervention and International Terrorism,* (Oslo : Forsvarets Forskningsinstitutt, 2002), (FFI/Rapport2003/01547); T. Hegghammer, 'Signalling and rebel recruitment tactics', *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol. 50 (2013). pp. 3-16. See also

Manus I. Midlarsky, *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011).
24
   Tinka Veldhuis and Jorgen Staun, *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model* (The Hague: Clingendael, 2009), p. 36.
25
   Mark Sedgwick, 'The Concept of Radicalisation as a Source of Confusion', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2010, p. 481. 26
   Arun Kundnani (2012), op. cit. (note 8), p. 5. 27
Expert Group, *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism: A Concise Report prepared by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation* (Submitted to the European Commission on 15 May 2008), p. 7. The entire text is also reprinted in Rik

There are many other definitions. Donatella della Porta and Gary LaFree, guest editors of a special issue of the International Journal of Conflict and Violence (2011), used and/or quoted seven different definitions alone in their introduction titled *Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation*:

- […] in the 1970s, the term radicalization emerged to stress the interactive (social movement/state) and processual (gradual escalation) dynamics in the formation of violent, often clandestine groups (Della Porta, 1995). In this approach, radicalization referred to the actual use of violence, with escalation in terms of forms and intensity;
- Radicalization may be understood as a process leading towards the increased use of political violence[…];
- […]radicalization is understood as an escalation process leading to violence;
- Many researchers conceptualize radicalization as a process characterized by increased commitment to and use of violent means and strategies in political conflicts. Radicalization from this point of view entails a change in perceptions towards polarizing and absolute definitions of a given situation, and the articulation of increasingly 'radical' aims and objectives. It may evolve from enmity towards certain social groups, or societal institutions and structure. It may also entail the increasing use of violent means.
- Radicalization may more profitably be analysed as a process of interaction between violent groups and their environment, or an effect of interactions between mutually hostile actors;
- Functionally, political radicalization is increased preparation for and commitment to inter-group conflict. Descriptively, radicalization means change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviours in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the group;
- Radicalization [… can be] understood to be the strategic use of physical force to influence several audiences.[29]

With such heterogeneous definitions, it is hard to conclude otherwise that 'radicalisation' is a very problematic concept. Along this line of thought, Peter Neumann once described radicalisation as 'what goes on before the bomb goes off'.[30] While succinctly put, Neumann's observation is not of much help in analytical terms. For lack of a superior approach to achieve an adequate understanding of the concept, let us look what the history of ideas can teach us. To do so we have to go to the roots of the word – radicalism.

Radicalism – the Historical Roots

The history of the concept of 'radicalism' can offer some guidance as to what should be a defensible understanding of the term radicalisation. The term 'radical', while already in use in the 18th century and often linked to the Enlightenment and the French and American revolutions of that period, became widespread in 19th century only, when it often referred to a political agenda advocating thorough social and political reform. 'Radical' also stood for representing or supporting an extreme section of a party.[31] That is a helpful start, especially if we see society as a whole as being the party.

What we see and define often depends, to a certain extent, on who, where and when we are. It is important to keep in mind that we are not all equally middle-of-the-road, moderate, traditional, normal or have

Coolsaet, *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge. European and American Experiences*, 2nd edition (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 269-88.
[28]   Expert Group (2008), op. cit. p. 7.
[29]   Donatella Della Porta & Gary LaFree, Guest Editorial: 'Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation', *IJCV*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2012, p.4.
[30]   Peter R. Neumann 'Introduction', in P.R. Neumann, J. Stoil, & D. Esfandiary (Eds.), *Perspectives on radicalisation and political violence: papers from the first International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence* (London: ICSR, 2008), p. 4; op. cit. David R. Mandel. 'Radicalisation: What does it mean?', in T. M. Pick, A. Speckhard, and B. Jacuch, *Home-grown terrorism: understanding and addressing the root causes of radicalisation among groups with an immigrant heritage in Europe* (Amsterdam, Washington, D.C.: IOS Press, 2009). Quoted from unpublished manuscript.
[31]   Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 2nd rev. edition 2002, p.1188; *Oxford English Dictionary* as quoted in Akil N. Awan, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O' Loughlin, *Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology* (London: Routledge, 2012), p 3.

the same reference point to measure the distance between an acceptable, common sense, mainstream political position and unacceptable radical positions on the left or right, or along some other political axis (e.g. ecological or religious).

In the course of history, 'radicalism' as a concept has changed much of its meaning. Many political parties that, in the 19th century called themselves 'radical', were 'radical' mainly on such issues as advocating republicanism rather than royalism. Some radicals were pleading for the introduction of a system of democracy in which the right to vote was not linked to the possession of property or to gender. Most of them were reformist and not revolutionary. 'Radical' was, at least in the second half of 19th century England, 'almost as respectable as 'liberal'.[32] In fact, the term was used at times to describe a wing of the Liberal Party. Many of the radicals, like the suffragettes in the late 19th and early 20th century were mostly non-violent activists. Their demonstrative public direct actions in support of women being allowed to vote were often illegal but not illegitimate, certainly not by today's standards. In fact, some of the 19th century radical demands have become mainstream entitlements today. In other words, the content of the concept 'radical' has changed quite dramatically in little more than a century: while in the 19th century, 'radical' referred primarily to liberal, anti-clerical, pro-democratic, progressive political positions, contemporary use – as in 'radical Islamism' – tends to point in the opposite direction: embracing an anti-liberal, fundamentalist, anti-democratic and regressive agenda.

Based on the above we must conclude – while not especially original but nevertheless too often forgotten – that 'radical' is a relative concept. This, in turn, also impacts on the concepts of 'radicalisation' and its derivatives: 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation'.

This conclusion is in line with a position advocated by Sedgwick. He suggests that 'radicalisation' can be best positioned in relation to mainstream political activities, at least in the context of democratic societies.[33] Such an approach is also reflected in a Canadian government definition describing radicalisation as the process by which 'individuals are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs towards extreme views.'[34]

To disentangle radicalism and radicalisation from related terms like extremism is an important task if we want to keep the concept analytically useful and not just a political container term used by political players as pejorative labels to place some distance between the middle ground they claim to stand on and the presumed far-out position of selected political enemies.

One effort at achieving greater differentiation has been made by Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko. They introduced a distinction between 'activism' and 'radicalism'. They defined the first as 'readiness to engage in legal and non-violent political action'[35] and the latter as 'readiness to engage in illegal and violent political action'.

While such a distinction is to be welcomed, it immediately begs the question by what standards 'legal' and 'illegal' are measured. If these standards are not grounded in international law (human rights law, humanitarian law, international criminal law), we should keep in mind that both authoritarian and democratic governments can make and change national laws so that one and the same activity can in the same place fall under legal 'activism' or illegal 'radicalism' from one day to the other if parliament introduces a new law or a dictator issues a decree with legal powers.[36] A further important question is whether the 'activism' or 'radicalism' is pro-active or reactive in the face of (perhaps violent and illegal) action and repression by government agencies such as the secret police, intelligence services, police and armed forces. Outside the context of majority-based democratic governments,

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   Raymond Williams entry on 'radical' in 'Keywords' (1983); reprinted in Akin N. Awan et al., op. cit., p. 131. See also Daniela Pisoiu, *Islamist Radicalisation in Europe: An occupational change process (*London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 13-24. – D. Pisoiu noted: '[…] by looking at the historical emergence and use of radicalism, it appears that for a significant period of time, radicalism was very much part of 'regular' political life. What is more, more often than not, radical movements militated for democracy and democratic principles rather than against them. Radical ideas referred, among others, to the progress and liberation of humankind, based on the principles of human rights and democracy'.
[33]
   Sedgwick concluded: 'the best solution for researchers is probably to abandon the idea that 'radical' or 'radicalisation' are absolute concepts, to recognize the essentially relative nature of the term 'radical'. And to be careful always to specify both the continuum being referred to and the location of what is seen as 'moderate' on that continuum'. Mark Sedgwick (2010), op. cit. (note 25), p. 491.
[34]
   Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Radicalisation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Ottawa: RCMP, 2009), p. 1; op. cit. Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, 'The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalisation', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012), p. 2. [35]
   Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley, 'Measuring Political Mobilisation: The Distinction Between Activism and Radicalism', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 21 (2010), p. 240; cit. Mark Sedgwick, 'The Concept of Radicalisation as a Source of Confusion', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 22, No. 4, p. 483. [36]
   As an illustration, Russian president Vladimir Putin decreed in 2012 that participation in a demonstration not authorised by the government will be criminalised and penalised by more than an average Russian individuals' annual salary.

adhering to the rule of law and respecting the state's constitution, the distinction between 'activism' and 'radicalism' loses much of its explanatory power. We also have to keep in mind that in the last two hundred years, people labelled 'radicals' have been both non-violent and violent and their radicalism has been both illegal and legal (e.g. during the Chinese Cultural Revolution).

Based on the history of political ideas, the concept of 'radicalism' might, in the view of this writer, usefully be described in terms of two main elements reflecting thought/attitude and action/behaviour respectively:

1. Advocating sweeping political change, based on a conviction that the status quo is unacceptable while at the same time a fundamentally different alternative appears to be available to the radical;
2. The means advocated to bring about the system-transforming radical solution for government and society can be non-violent and democratic (through persuasion and reform) or violent and non-democratic (through coercion and revolution).[37]

Radicals then are not *per se* violent and while they might share certain characteristics (e.g. alienation from the state, anger over a country's foreign policy, feelings of discrimination) with (violent) extremists, there are also important differences (such as regarding the willingness to engage in critical thinking).[38] It does not follow that a radical attitude must result in violent behaviour – a finding well established by decades of research.[39]

Defining (Violent) Extremism

Radicalism is often equated with extremism, but while both can – as ideal types – be described in terms of distance from moderate, mainstream or status quo positions, a further differentiation makes sense. In terms of historical precedents (e.g. Fascism, Communism), extremists can be characterised as political actors who tend to disregard the rule of law[40] and reject pluralism in society. Manus Midlarsky, in his study *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* has described extremism in this way:

Political extremism is defined as the will to power by a social movement in the service of a political program typically at variance with that supported by existing state authorities, and for which individual liberties are to be curtailed in the name of collective goals, including the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program. Restrictions on individual freedom in the interests of the collectivity and the willingness to kill massively are central to this

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Adapted from A.P. Schmid (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (2011), op. cit. pp. 679-80; and, in part, from Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 462. 38
Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, 'The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalisation', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012), p. 2. 39
To quote F.M. Moghaddam: 'Almost eight decades of psychological research on attitudes […] suggest that radicalisation of attitudes need not result in radicalisation of behaviour.' Fathali M. Moghaddam, 'De-radicalisation and the Staircase from Terrorism', in David Canter (Ed.), *The Faces of Terrorism: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), p. 280.
40
The Rule of Law concept can be described in terms of a dozen principles: 1. Common ethics; 2. The supremacy of the law; 3. Restraint of arbitrary power; 4. Separation of powers; 5. The principle of 'habeas corpus'; 6. The principle of 'nulla poena sine lege' 7. Judicial independence; 8. Equality before the law; 9. State protection for all; 10 Supremacy of civilian authority; 11. Prohibition of summary justice; and 12. the principle of proportionality. The Rule of Law establishes a framework for the conduct and behaviour of both members of society and officials of the government. At the core of the concept there are three basic notions: (i) that people should be ruled not by the whims of man but by the objective determination of general laws; (ii) that nobody should stand above the law, and that ordinary citizens can find redress against the more powerful for any act which involves a breach of the law; and (iii) that nobody should fall outside the protection of the law. Where the Rule of Law is firmly in place, it ensures the responsiveness of government to the people as it enables critical civil participation. The more citizens are stakeholders in the political process, the less likely it is that some of them form, or cooperate with, a parallel shadow society, guided not by the Rules of Law. Alex P. Schmid, 'The Concept of the Rule of Law', in *International Scientific and Professional Advisory Council of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme: The Rule of Law in the Global Village: Issues of Sovereignty and Universality* (Milan: ISPAC, 2001), pp. x –xi.

definition: these elements characterize all of the extremist groups considered here. This definition is consistent with others put forward by scholars of fascism […].[41]

Extremists strive to create a homogeneous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological tenets; they seek to make society conformist by suppressing all opposition and subjugating minorities. That distinguishes them from mere radicals who accept diversity and believe in the power of reason rather than dogma.[42] In the context of democratic societies, (violent) extremist groups, movements and parties tend to have a political programme that contains many of the following elements:

- Anti-constitutional, anti-democratic, anti-pluralist, authoritarian;
- Fanatical, intolerant, non-compromising, single-minded black-or-white thinkers;
- Rejecting the rule of law while adhering to an ends-justify-means philosophy;
- Aiming to realise their goals by any means, including, when the opportunity offers itself, the use of massive political violence against opponents.

Extremists on the political left and right and those of a religious-fundamentalist orientation as well as those of an ethno-nationalist political hue tend, in their struggle to gain, maintain or defend state power, to show a propensity to prefer, on their paths to realise their political programmes:

- Use of force/violence over persuasion;
- Uniformity over diversity;
- Collective goals over individual freedom;
- Giving orders over dialogue.[43]

These and the strong emphasis on ideology[44] are the main distinguishing characteristics of extremists. Extremists in power tend towards totalitarianism. This also applies to Islamist extremists. In an illuminating article entitled *Islamism and Totalitarianism*, Jeffrey Bale noted that:

> […] despite their seemingly absolute rejection of Western values and their claims to be purely Islamic in inspiration, several Islamist leaders and thinkers were strongly influenced by and indeed borrowed considerably from modern Western political ideologies and movements such as nationalism, communism and fascism, in particular their techniques of organisation (the establishment of front groups and parallel hierarchies), propaganda, ideological indoctrination and mass mobilisation. Sayyid Abu al-A'la Mawdudi went so far as to openly claim that Islam – read Islamism – was a 'revolutionary party' comparable to communism and fascism, Hasan al-Banna was clearly influenced by fascist ideas and organisational techniques, and even the ostensible anti-

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   Manus I. Midlarsky, *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), p. 7. [42]
   For a recent in-depth discussion of extremism see Astrid Bötticher & Miroslav Mares, E*xtremismus. Theorien – Konzepte – Formen,* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), pp. 54-58; for an older discussion, see the Lemma 'Extremismus' in Dieter Nohlen et al. *Lexikon der Politik. Band 7: Politische Begriffe* (München: C.H. Beck, 1998), pp. 172-73. [43]
   Based on A.P. Schmid, 'Glossary and Abbreviations of Terms and Concepts relating to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism', in A.P. Schmid (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 630; and Manus I. Midlarsky, *Origins of Political Extremism* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), p. 7. See also, Astrid Bötticher and Miroslav Mares (2012), op. cit. (note 43), pp. 58-9.
[44]
   Ideology stands for 'systems of ideas that tell people how the social world is (supposed to be) functioning, what their place in it is and what is expected of them. Ideologies are patterns of beliefs and expressions that people use to interpret and evaluate the world in a way designed to shape, mobilise, direct, organize and justify certain modes and courses of action. They are often a set of dogmatic ideas associated with a system of values about how communities should be structured and how its members should behave. Major political ideological doctrines are nationalism, liberalism, fascism, communism and anarchism. Ideologies are often a secular substitute for lack of a religious orientation, offering an interpretation of social reality, a way to a better future and a model of the Good Society with a prescription how this could be brought about. In practice, ideologies often serve as mobilizing instruments for those in power or those aspiring to state power.' A.P. Schmid, 'Glossary and Abbreviations of Terms and Concepts Relating to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism'; in A. P. Schmid (2011), op. cit., pp. 643-44.

Western puritan Sayyid Qutb devoted considerable space to emphasising the vitally important role of the Islamist 'vanguard' (tali'a) in organising, mobilising and properly 'educating' Muslims.[17]

While radicals might be violent or not, might be democrats or not, extremists are never democrats. Their state of mind tolerates no diversity. They are also positively in favour of the use of force to obtain and maintain political power, although they might be vague and ambiguous about this in their public pronouncements, especially when they are still in a position of weakness. Extremists generally tend to have inflexible 'closed minds', adhering to a simplified mono-causal interpretation of the world where you are either with them or against them, part of the problem or part of the solution. Radicals, on the other hand, have historically tended to be more open to rationality and pragmatic compromise, without abandoning their search for getting to the root of a problem (the original meaning of 'radical' which stems from radix, Latin for root). Radicalism is redeemable – radical militants can be brought back into the mainstream, extremist militants, however, much less so.

In the view of this writer, it makes sense to distinguish between (open-minded) radicals and (closed-mind) extremists.[18] If this distinction is accepted, the main problem is not radicalisation to radicalism (even when it leads

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[17] Jeffrey M. Bale, 'Islamism and Totalitarianism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions,* Vol. 10, No. 2 (2009), p. 85.
[18] Here I follow Astrid Bötticher and Miroslav Mares who noted: 'Der Extremismus lässt sich […] vom Radikalismusbegriff abgrenzen: 'Alle Extremisten glauben an die Möglichkeit einer homogenen Gemeinschaft, in der eine Interessenidentität zwischen Regierenden und Regierten besteht'. Der Extremismus zielt so auf die Gesamtgesellschaft und hat die Konsequenz des Zwanges mit eingeschlossen. Hier geht es nicht so sehr um Einsicht, sondern um Unterwerfung. Extremismus ist eher mit dem Begriff der Konformität verbunden – Radikalismus eher mit Einsicht und Diversität'. Astrid Bötticher & Miroslav Mares, *Extremismus. Theorien – Konzepte – Formen* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), p. 58. [47]
   For a discussion, see Lorenzo Vidino, 'Countering Radicalisation in America', *USIP Special Report* No. 262 (November 2010), pp. 6-8.

to some forms of political violence) but turning towards extremism (which positively accepts violence in politics and can lead to terrorism and other grave acts such as genocide).

Some government agencies in the West make a distinction between 'violent extremists' and 'non-violent extremists' and then focus much of their counter-terrorism (CT) efforts on countering violent extremism only. The origin of the concept 'Countering Violent Extremism' (CVE) goes back to the year 2005, when some US policymakers in the second Bush administration sought to replace the bellicose 'Global War on Terror' (GWOT) with some lower-key concept like 'Struggle Against Violent Extremism' (SAVE). Some CT officials see non-violent extremists as possible partners in countering the violent extremists. Are non-violent extremists harmless in democracies? Not when they adhere to the four tell-tale signs identified above. Fact is that some of them, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood, have been involved in terrorist campaigns in the past while members of other groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir have been associated with various forms of political violence in some countries (but not in others), apparently depending on expediency and opportunities.

There are two views among Western security agencies and CT policymakers with regard to non-violent extremist organisations: some see them as 'conveyor belts' for some of their members on a path to terrorism. Others consider them as a 'firewall' – preventing some radical youth from gliding further down the slippery slope to terrorism.[47] Who is right? Some examples can be found in support of each proposition. However, so-called non-violent extremist organisations that reject Western 'core values' – such as democracy, (gender) equality, pluralism, separation of state and religion, freedom of thought and expression, man-made laws, respect for human rights and humanitarian law – make for dubious allies in the fight against terrorism. In fact, they are often part of the radical milieu which is supportive of the goals if not methods of the terrorists. It can even be argued that 'non-violent extremism' is a contradiction in terms.[19] While there can be non-violent and violent radicals, it makes, in my view and based on the distinction between radicalism and extremism elaborated above, less sense to distinguish between violent and non-violent extremists. Partnering with extremists is risky and, not only in the view of this writer, also a mistaken policy. As a former extremist and member of Hizb ut-Tahrir warned:

> [T]he central theoretical flaw in PVE [Preventing Violent Extremism, Britain's counterradicalisation strategy] is that it accepts the premise that non-violent extremists can be made to act as bulwarks against violent extremists. Non-violent extremists have consequently become well dug in as partners of national and local government and the police. Some of the government's chosen collaborators in 'addressing grievances' of angry young Muslims are themselves at the forefront of stoking those grievances against British foreign policy; western social values; and alleged state-sanctioned 'Islamophobia'. PVE is thus underwriting the very Islamist ideology which spawns an illiberal, intolerant and anti-western world view. Political and theological extremists, acting with the authority conferred by official recognition, and indoctrinating young people with an ideology of hostility to western values.[20]

The conservative British government of David Cameron has largely moved away from the previous Labour government's policy of partnering with non-violent extremists to fight terrorism. Later in this Paper, the issue of whether or not cooperation with 'non-violent extremists' should be sought in the fight against 'violent' extremists will be explored in more detail.

Both radicalism and extremism are, as noted before, relational concepts; that is, they need to be judged in relation to a benchmark. The standard reference points by which radicalism and extremism are assessed in Western societies include Western 'core values' like democracy, majority rule with safeguards for minorities, rule of law,

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[19] The way 'non-violent' is used can also be a source of confusion. One should, to be conceptually clear, distinguish between (i) 'not-violent' and (ii) 'non-violence'. Ad (i): On the one hand, there are social movements and political parties that compete for power by using persuasive strategies and manipulative instruments without recourse to political violence. They are 'not-violent'. Ad (ii): 'Non-violence' is, however, (also) a qualification used to refer to activist radical groups that use concepts developed by M. Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Gene Sharp to bring about political change without the recourse to armed force, but including, next to persuasive also disruptive and coercive tactics like strikes, blockades and occupations.

[20] Lorenzo Vidino, *Countering Radicalisation in America: Lessons from Europe*, US Institute of Peace, Special Report No. 262 (November 2010).   50

   United States Bipartisan Policy Center. National Security Preparedness Group. *Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America* (Washington DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, June 2011), Box 1: Definitions – Key Terms and Concepts.

pluralism, separation of state and religion, equality before the law, gender equality, freedom of thought and expression – to name the most important ones.

Many governments use the term 'violent extremists' as quasi-synonym for terrorists and insurgents.[50] The British Crown Prosecution Service, for instance, defines 'violent extremism' as the 'demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which foment, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs' – including those which provoke violence (terrorist or criminal) based on ideological, political, or religious beliefs and foster hatred that leads to violence.[21] A report by the Australian government recently noted that

> […] the concept "violent extremism" is often interchanged with terrorism, political violence and extreme violence. The literature covering 'violent extremism' employs the concept in a way that suggests it is self-evident and self-explanatory. Often enough the need to "counter violent extremism" is noted in the literature but no actual definition of what 'violent extremism' constitutes, is provided. The fact is, the terms violent extremism, political violence, political terrorism and terrorism have been used interchangeably in the Australian and international literature examined. Thus no real distinction between violent extremism and terrorism has fully evolved, in fact, it remains an evolving concept.[22]

This observation has been supported by others.[23] There is, in a sizeable part of the literature on terrorism, an unfortunate tendency to equate radicalism with extremism and both with terrorism, while at the same time using terrorism as shorthand for anti-state political violence in general. These are, however, different (though at times related and partly overlapping) concepts. Another shortcoming is that, in many cases, these terms are applied to non-state actors only. This is regrettable as all double standards are.

Government Definitions of Radicalisation

Earlier, I mentioned della Porta and LaFree's work on *Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation*, which contained seven different academic definitions of radicalisation. Unfortunately, the situation is not much better with governmental and inter-governmental definitions. In 2006, the European Commission defined radicalisation as '[t]he phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism'.[24] There are several problems with such a formulation. One lies in the word 'could'. It leaves open the question under what conditions such a process takes place. The second problem is that the emphasis on 'opinions, views and ideas' – apparently referring to the role of ideology – is too broad and vague. Thirdly, radicalisation can – because historically it has – lead to forms of conflict other than terrorism. Furthermore, the brevity of the European Commission's definition does little to address the complexity of the phenomenon.

Regional (e.g. EU) and national definitions of radicalisation co-exist, even if they show considerable diversity. They tend to be status quo friendly and have little sympathy for those who are disenchanted with the status quo and want to change it by other than non-violent means. In Europe and the Americas there are a number of rather diverse governmental definitions of radicalisation in existence.[25] To give four examples of definitions used by security agencies:

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[21] United Kingdom Crown Prosecution Service, *Violent Extremism and Related Criminal Offences*. Retrieved from http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/violent_extremism.html; Sarah Canna (Ed.). C*ountering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods and Strategies*, (Washington, DC: NSI, September 2011).

[22] Minerva Nasser-Eddine, Bridget Garnham, Katerina Agostino and Gilbert Caluya, *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review* (Canberra: Australian Government, Department of Defence March 2011), p. 9. The literature reviewed consisted of 526 articles.

[23] See for instance A.P. Schmid (Ed.) (2011), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*. op. cit., pp. 5-7.

[24] Tinka Veldhuis and Jorgen Staun, *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Mode*l, (The Hague: Clingendael, 2009), p. 6.

[25] See, for instance, Minerva Nasser-Eddine (2011), et. al., op. cit. (note 5) where the authors noted: 'Although there are various perspectives on radicalisation, what they share is a focus on the mechanisms of radicalisation: namely, recruitment and indoctrination. That is how individuals move from simply being frustrated or disaffected towards accepting violence as a mode of political struggle'; (ibid, p. 14);

1. *Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET):* 'a process, by which a person to an increasing extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to reach a specific political/ideological objective';[26]

2. *The Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD):* 'The (active) pursuit of and/or support to far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect)';[27]

3. *US Department of Homeland Security (DHS):* 'The process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect social change' (DHS ' Office of Intelligence and Analysis);[28]

4. *Swedish Security Service (Säpo):* 'Radicalisation can be both: 'a process that leads to ideological or religious activism to introduce radical change to society' and a 'process that leads to an individual or group using, promoting or advocating violence for political aims'.[29]

In the first case (1), the emphasis is on undemocratic or violent means. In the second (2), on far-reaching changes in society, in the third on (3) adopting an extremist belief and in the last (4) on violence with political aims. Some definitions answer the question 'radicalisation towards what?' with 'towards political violence', others with 'towards terrorism' and yet others 'towards violent extremism'.[30]

Yet not every use of political violence is 'terrorist' or 'extremist' nor is political violence, though illegal under national laws, always illegitimate – especially in the context of popular resistance against highly repressive undemocratic regimes as in the case of the Arab Spring. Terrorism needs to be distinguished from some other forms of political violence. As there exists legal acts of warfare and illegal war crimes in armed conflicts, it makes sense to differentiate normless and criminal terrorism from illegal but sometimes (more) legitimate forms of political violence (although the parallel only goes some way).

The Spectrum of Political Violence

In reality, there are many forms of political violence short of terrorism or (civil) war that are quite different from terrorism as practiced currently by certain non-state actors who conduct campaigns of violence or use illegitimate violent methods against unarmed civilians for the purpose of intimidating, coercing or otherwise influencing conflict

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See also, US Homeland Security Institute, *Radicalisation: An Overview and Annotated Bibliography of Open-Source Literature. Final Report, 15 December 2006* (Arlington: Homeland Security Institute, 2006), This report noted: 'Radicalisation, broadly defined, is the process whereby an individual or group adopts extremist beliefs and behaviours', (ibid. p. 1).

[26] PET, Danish Intelligence Services, 2009. See also COT, *Radicalisation, Recruitment and the EU Counter-radicalisation Strategy* (The Hague: COT, 17 November 2008), p. 13.

[27] AIVD [Dutch Intelligence and Security Service], *From Dawa to Jihad: The Various Threats from Radical Islam to the Democratic Legal Order* (The Hague: AIVD, 2004).

[28] Homeland Security Institute, *Radicalisation: An Overview and Annotated Bibliography of Open-Source Literature. Final Report* (Arlington: HSI, 2006), pp. 2 & 12; 'The term 'violent radicalisation' has been defined by the US *Violent Radicalisation and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007* as the process of adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change'. Available online at http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/110/hr1955/text accessed, 24 October 2007.

[29] Swedish Security Service, '*Radikalisering och avradikalisering*', 2009; see also, Magnus Ranstorp, P*reventing Violent Radicalisation and Terrorism. The Case of Indonesia* (Stockholm: Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies 2009), p. 2.

[30] For a discussion of the different meanings in the literature, see also Mark Sedgwick's article in *Terrorism and Political Violence*. He noted: 'the ubiquity of use of the term ,radicalisation' suggests a consensus about its meaning, but this article shows through a review of a variety of definitions that no such consensus exists. The article then argues that use of the term is problematic not just for these reasons, but

parties and other significant audiences. To give a few examples of political violence other than terrorism (including some forms of armed conflict):

- Hunger strike to the bitter end/self-burning (political suicide);
- Blockade/public property damage/sabotage;
- Hate crimes/lynching;
- Violent demonstrations/mob violence/rioting;
- Brigandry/warlordism;
- Raids/ razzia/ pillage /pogroms;
- Torture/mutilation/mass rape;
- Tyrannicide;
- Extra-judicial execution/massacre/disappearances;
- Ethnic cleansing/mass eviction/ purge;
- Guerrilla warfare/partisan warfare;
- Subversion/ intervention;
- Revolt/ coup d'état rebellion/ uprising/ insurgency/ revolution.[61]

We should better distinguish terrorism from other forms of political violence. We should also acknowledge that there are certain forms of violent resistance to political oppression that, while illegal under national law, are accepted by international humanitarian law. Whether governmental force or non-governmental political violence is used offensively or defensively, with no regard for collateral damage or with maximum restraint, as a means of provocation or as a weapon of last resort; whether it is used against armed opponents or against defenceless people; whether it has the backing of the majority of people or has no democratic legitimisation; whether it has the approval of the UN Security Council or some regional security organisation or not – these are all important distinctions that bear on the morality, legality and legitimacy of the use of force/violence in the eyes of various audiences. Together they determine whether or not the use of force and political violence ought to be considered justified or not. To call all non-governmental use of force/political violence 'terrorism' is not helpful in analytical terms (although it can be very useful for demagogues who play politics with the terrorism label).

Political violence needs to be situated in the broader spectrum of political action – action by those holding state power as well as non-state militant actors. The following table aims to position some forms of political violence in such a wider classificatory system and provide a broader context in which to position typologies of political violence and terrorism. This spectrum of political action reflects the interplay between the forces of order and the forces of change in violent and non-violent opposition modes. It focuses on actors as well

because it is used in three different contexts: the security context, the integration context, and the foreign-policy context'. M. Sedgwick, (2010) op. cit. (note 25), p. 479.
[61] Adapted from A. P. Schmid (Ed.), op. cit. (note 53), pp. 5-6. It should be noted that some forms of political violence listed here can (also) be deemed as "terrorism"; there is a grey area with overlaps, depending on context. For an extensive discussion, See A. P. Schmid. (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 5-7 & 39-98.

as forms of political violence. In this context, forms of violence may be considered tactics, strategies of action or outcomes. In circumstances where the Rule of Law is upheld, confrontation is seen through opposition politics, and is classified as free persuasive politics. In the second stage of the escalation, pressure politics are applied by one or both sides, which might or might not be legal and/or legitimate. Some forms of government repression are legitimate based on regular or emergency law provisions; others might constitute 'crimes of repression'.[31] Some of the tactics available to those opposing a status quo perceived as unjust or oppressive can be qualified as sedition

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[31] A. P. Schmid, 'Repression, State Terrorism, and Genocide', in P. T. Bushnell, V. Shlapentokh, C. K. Vanderpool, and J. Sundram, (Eds.), *State organised terror: the case of violent internal repression* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 23-37.

and subversion.[32] On the other hand, the conceptualisation of forms of illegitimate behaviour by a ruling power against its constituents can be described as oppression and repression.[33] However, in practice there is overlap between these concepts.[34]

Violent politics – the third level in the spectrum of political action – incorporates a variety of action methods available to varying degrees to both sides of the conflict dyad, with the list of potential types of behaviour described just being a sample.[35] For those in power, a greater range of repressive tactics is available, differentiated by the scale of the response to the forces of change. In their most extreme form, national political conflict results in civil war, and, where the opposition is victorious, revolution.
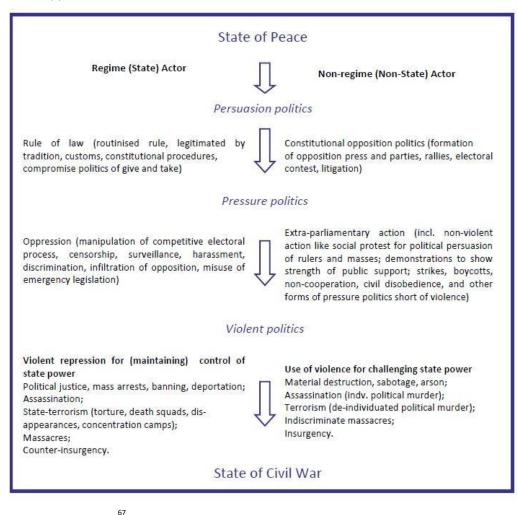

Table 1: The Spectrum of Political Action [67]

In the framework outlined in Table 1 above, the action and reaction of either party are positioned to correspond roughly in line with the strategies available to them. This enables the examination of the tactics in both side's repertoire, and the potential symmetries and asymmetries of particular conflict scenarios. Such a conceptualisation is useful for it can reveal asymmetries in conflict waging, for example when a democratic regime

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[32] J. I. Ross. *The dynamics of political crime* (New York: Sage, 2003); J. I. Ross, 'Political crimes against the state', in R. Wright and J. M. Miller (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminology* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 1225-30.

[33] M. Stohl, and G. A. Lopez, 'Introduction', in M. Stohl, and G. A. Lopez, *The state as terrorist* (Westport CT: Aldwych Press, 1984), p. 8.

[34] A. P. Schmid, 'Repression, State Terrorism, and Genocide', in T. Bushnell (1991) et al., op. cit. (note 62.).

[35] S. Parmentier and E. G. M. Weitekamp, 'Political crimes and serious violations of human rights: towards a criminology of international crimes', in S. Parmentier and E. G. M. Weitekamp (Eds.), *Crime and human rights: sociology of crime, law and deviance.* Vol. 9 (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007), pp. 109-46. [67]

   Adapted from A. P. Schmid, *Political Terrorism*, (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1988), pp. 58-59; this updated version and the explanatory text is taken from S.V. Marsden and A. P. Schmid, 'Typologies of Terrorism and Political Violence', in A.P Schmid (Ed.) (2011), op. cit. p. 161.

is attacked by tactics from the repertoire of violent politics from the side of a non-state violent actor. Terrorism is included into this typology as de-individuated murder, a term chosen to indicate that the victim matters mostly as a message generator – one victim can be easily substituted with another since the message and not the victim mainly matters to the terrorist.

Terrorism – like torture, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide – belongs to a special category of violence that cannot be justified under any circumstance. While there is universal agreement in international law that torture, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide can never be condoned, we still lack such universal agreement on terrorism which is, sometimes deliberately, confused with 'freedom fighting' and 'resistance against foreign occupation'. These two concepts refer to goals of armed struggle – goals that can be pursued by various means. Terrorism, however, refers not to noble (or ignoble) ends but to illicit and extranormal means in the pursuit of various goals. A discussion on radicalisation also requires some clarification on the concept of terrorism since (violent) radicalisation is supposed to lead to terrorism. As numerous books have been written on this topic, the next section will only provide a brief overview.

Defining Terrorism

Even more than radicalisation, terrorism has been a contested and politicised term. There exist hundreds of definitions in academia and in governments – the US government alone maintains some twenty different but simultaneously operative definitions in its many agencies and departments.[36] The situation is so complex and confusing that Didier Bigo, a French political scientist, concluded 'terrorism does not exist: or more precisely, it is not a useable concept in social sciences'.[37]

Such a purist position, however, is untenable, the more so because some of the terrorists themselves use the label proudly ('I am a terrorist, not a murderer' – Vera Zasulich, 1878). Those who believe in 'the philosophy of the bomb' can look back on at least 150 years of terrorist theory formation. If Bigo were right, academics would steer away from using the concept, leaving the concept of terrorism to terrorists, counter-terrorism officials and the public media.

The fact that the UN has not yet managed to reach a universally acceptable *legal* definition of terrorism is often cited as proof that it is impossible to find a good enough *scientific* definition. However, that inability of the UN has more to do with positions taken by members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC – now renamed Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) and to a lesser extent those of the Arab League (AL), on Palestine and Kashmir, than with some intrinsic problem with the concept of terrorism itself. The OIC and AL obstruction in the UN General Assembly's Legal Committee has not prevented others, including regional organisations, from seeking and achieving greater consensus about the phenomenon. There is, for instance, the European Union's Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism of 2002 which defines terrorism as:

> Criminal offences against persons and property that, given their nature or context, may seriously damage a country or international organisation where committed with the aim of: seriously intimidating a population; or unduly compelling a Government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act; or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, economic or social structure of a country or an international organisation.[38]
> What this European definition does not 'catch' is the strategic use of raw emotions that terrorists seek to provoke and exploit through their deliberately staged atrocities and norm violations. The EU definition is also blind to the communicative function of terrorist violence which is directed

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[36] For a list of 260 definitions see Joseph J. Easson and Alex P. Schmid, '250-plus Academic, Governmental and Intergovernmental Definitions of Terrorism', Appendix 2.1, in A.P. Schmid (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 99-157.

[37] Didier Bigo, 'L'Impossible Cartographie du Terrorisme', *Cultures & Conflits*, 2005, see also, Sybille Reinke de Buitrago (Ed.), *Portraying the Other in International Relations: Cases of Othering, Their Dynamics and the Potential for Transformation* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), p. 108.

[38] Council Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism, 13 July 2002 (2002/475/JHA). Available online at

against one group (often randomly chosen or symbolic victims) in order to influence others (one or several target audiences). These elements have been captured better in the Academic Consensus Definition which has been sharpened in three rounds of consultations since the early 1980s. Its latest iteration describes terrorism as a tactic employed in three main contexts: (i) illegal state repression; (ii) propagandistic agitation by non-state actors in times of peace or outside zones of conflict and (iii) as an illicit tactic of irregular warfare employed by state- and non-state actors.[71] According to the Academic Consensus Definition, terrorism refers to both ideas (ideology) and action (behaviour). Terrorism is, on the one hand

a *doctrine* about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, a conspiratorial *practice* of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties.[72]

The different understandings of 'terrorism' and the different types of terrorism (regime terrorism, vigilante terrorism, insurgent terrorism, left-wing terrorism, right-wing terrorism, ethno-nationalist terrorism, jihadist terrorism, lone wolf terrorism, single issue terrorism, cyber-terrorism, etc.[73]) make the search for radicalisation to terrorism such a complex one.

To remind the reader of the heterogeneity of terrorism which stands in the way of mono-causal explanations of its causes, including radicalisation, one may recall the opinions of some experts :

Feyyaz (2013): 'In conceptual terms, terrorism is being expressed through eight narratives: i) as expression of religious constructions; ii) as a protest and rallying symbol (ideological); iii) as instrument of policy (political); iv) as violent criminal behaviour (organized crime); v) as a warfare implement (spatiotemporal swathe); vi) as propaganda tool (visual warfare through media); vii) as vengeance (norm) ;and viii) as vigilantism (state functionalism).'[74]

Gurr & Marshall (2005): 'Terrorism, as a political act, stands at once at the nexus between individual and collective action, the emotional and the rational, the conventional and the unconventional. It can be the strongest form of protest, the weakest form of rebellion, or a specialized tactic in a broader process of tyranny or warfare.'[75]

Krumwiede (2004): 'In the light of the diversity of the phenomenon 'terrorism' and the multiplicity and differential weight of relevant conditions for concrete cases, it is impossible to formulate substantial general hypotheses with broad validity, that is, hypotheses which are valid for all cases or at least most cases.'[76]

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http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2002:164:0003:0003:EN:PDF

[71]   Alex P. Schmid (Ed.), (2011), op. cit. pp. 86-7.

[72]   Ibid. p. 86. [73]

    For a survey of existing typologies see Sarah V. Marsden and Alex P. Schmid, 'Typologies of Terrorism and Political Violence', in A.P. Schmid (Ed.), (2011), op. cit. (note 68), pp. 158-200. [74]

    Muhammad Feyyaz, 'Conceptualizing terrorism trends patterns in Pakistan – an empirical perspective', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (February 2013), p. 96. Available online at http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/243/html accessed February 2013.

[75]   Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, *Peace and Conflict* (College Park, University of Maryland, Center for International Development & Conflict Management, 2005), p. 63.

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Heinrich-W. Krumwiede, 'Ursachen des Terrorismus', in Peter Waldmann (Ed.), *Determinanten der Entstehung und Entwicklung terroristischer Organisationen – Forschungsstand und Untersuchungsergebnisse* (MS, 2004), p. 70.

A point to keep in mind is that political terrorism by non-state actors is often a strategy of provocation: one of the goals of insurgent terrorists is, in such cases, to manoeuvre the government into positions that become less acceptable to many citizens in society, thereby polarising society. We know from captured documents that some failed or foiled al-Qaeda attacks in Europe were conceived to provoke repression against Muslims in general in the expectations that, as a result, many more of them would radicalise and join the ranks of the Jihadists.[39]

The relationship between radicalism, radicalisation and terrorism is a complex one. John Horgan has noted correctly that 'the relationship between radicalisation and terrorism is poorly understood' – '[n]ot every radical becomes a terrorist' and '[n]ot every terrorist holds radical views'.[40] It is also important to distinguish between terrorism as a political doctrine and terrorism as an act of political violence. Terrorist political crimes are in a way remarkably similar to war crimes as both involve, at their core, deliberate attacks on civilians and/or the taking of hostages. However, attempts to define acts of terrorism as 'peacetime equivalents of war crimes' have so far not received widespread state support.[41]

This paper has so far attempted to clarify the concepts 'radicalism', '(violent) extremism', 'political violence' and 'terrorism'. This should allow us to make some progress towards a clearer understanding as to what we should term 'radicalisation'.

Re-conceptualising 'Radicalisation'

In recent years the term 'radicalisation' has, like the term terrorism, become very politicised, i.e. it has been used in the political game of labelling and blame attribution.[42] Academics too have come up with multiple definitions that often lack precision. To illustrate the point, here is a sample of academic definitions and descriptions:

- *Taarnby (2005):* 'the progressive personal development from law-abiding Muslim to Militant Islamist';
- Jensen (2006): 'a process during which people gradually adopt views and ideas which might lead to the legitimisation of political violence';
- *Ongering (2007):* 'process of personal development whereby an individual adopts ever more extreme political or politic-religious ideas and goals, becoming convinced that the attainment of these goals justifies extreme methods';
- *Demant, Slootman, Buijs & Tillie (2008):* 'a process of de-legitimation, a process in which confidence in the system decreases and the individual retreats further and further into his or her own group, because he or she no longer feels part of society';
- *Ashour (2009):* 'Radicalisation is a process of relative change in which a group undergoes ideological and/or behavioural transformations that lead to the rejection of democratic principles (including the peaceful alternation of power and the legitimacy of ideological and political pluralism) and possibly to the utilisation of violence, or to an increase in the levels of violence, to achieve political goals';
- *Olesen (2009):* 'the process through which individuals and organisations adopt violent strategies – or threaten to do so – in order to achieve political goals';
- *Githens-Mazer (2009):* 'a collectively defined, individually felt moral obligation to participate in 'direct action' (legal or illegal – as opposed to 'apathy')';

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[39] Based on the papers of Sheik Younis al-Mauretani, the 'foreign minister' of Al-Qaeda, in his instructions to German terrorists, seized by German authorities. *Der Tagesspiegel*, 23 January 2012.

[40] John Horgan at START conference at the University of Maryland, College Park, 1 September 2011.

[41] This was first proposed by the author; see, A.P. Schmid, *The Definition of Terrorism. A Study in Compliance with CTL/9/91/2207 for the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch* (Leiden: Center for the Study of Social Conflicts (COMT), December 1992).

[42] John Horgan remarked the term radicalisation 'has become so politicized', START Conference, University of Maryland, 1 September 2011.

- *Horgan & Bradock (2010):* 'the social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist political or religious ideology';
- *Kortweg, et al. (2010):* 'the quest to drastically alter society, possibly through the use of unorthodox means, which can result in a threat to the democratic structures and institutions';
- *Mandel (2012):* 'an increase in and/or reinforcing of extremism in the thinking, sentiments, and/or behaviour of individuals and/or groups of individuals';
- *Awan, et al. (2012):* 'a phenomenon that has emerged in the early twenty-first century because the new media ecology enables patterns of connectivity that can be harnessed by individuals and groups for practices of persuasion, organisation and the enactment of violence. The very possibility of this happening but uncertainty about how it happens created a conceptual vacuum which 'radicalisation' filled';
- *Sinai (2012):* 'Radicalisation is the process by which individuals – on their own or as part of a group – begin to be exposed to, and then accept, extremist ideologies';
- *Baehr (2013, forthcoming):* 'The concept radicalisation defines an individual process, which, influenced by external actors, causes a socialisation during which an internalisation and adoption of ideas and views takes place which are supported and advanced in every form. [Armed] with these ideas and views, the persons [affected] strive to bring about a radical change of the social order. If the ideas and views represent an extremist ideology, they even seek to achieve their goals by means of terrorist violence. [What is] decisive is, that radicalisations presuppose a process of socialization, during which individuals adopt, over a shorter or longer period of time, political ideas and views which in their extremist form can lead to the legitimization of political violence'.[43]

If we want to continue to use the concept of radicalisation in a meaningful way, there is a need for greater uniformity and precision. Based on the preceding discussion and, more importantly, based on insights from a review of a sizeable part of the literature (which follows below), I have found it useful to re-conceptualise radicalisation as:

> an individual or collective (group) process whereby, usually in a situation of political polarisation, normal practices of dialogue, compromise and tolerance between political actors and groups with diverging interests are abandoned by one or both sides in a conflict dyad in favour of a growing commitment to engage in confrontational tactics of conflict-waging. These can include either (i) the use of (non-violent) pressure and coercion, (ii) various forms of political violence other than terrorism or (iii) acts of violent extremism in the form of terrorism and war crimes. The process is, on the side of rebel factions, generally accompanied by an ideological socialization away from mainstream or status quo-oriented positions towards more radical or extremist positions involving a dichotomous world view and the acceptance of an alternative focal point of political mobilization outside the dominant political order as the existing system is no longer recognized as appropriate or legitimate.[44]

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[43] Definitions from: Catherine Bott, Jennifer Leetz and John Markey, *Radicalisation: An Overview and Annotated Bibliography of OpenSource Literature, Final Report* (Homeland Security Institute, 15 December 2006), p. 2; D. Pisoiu, (2012) op. cit. (note 32), pp. 11-2; Froukje Demant, Marieke Slootman, Frank Buijs and Jean Tillie, *Decline, Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of De-radicalisation* (Amsterdam: IMES 2008), pp. 12-3; John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 'Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of Deradicalisation Programs', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 22 (2010), p. 279; Jonathan Githens-Mazer, *Causal Processes, Radicalisation and Bad Policy: The Importance of Case Studies of Radical Violent Takfiri Jihadism for Establishing Logical Causality* (unpublished paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, 6 September, 2009); see also, M. Sedgwick (2010), op. cit. (note 25), p. 483; David R. Mandel. 'Radicalisation: What does it mean?', in T. Pick, A. Speckhard & B. Jacuch (Eds.), *Homegrown Terrorism: Understanding and addressing the root causes of radicalisation among groups with an immigrant heritage in Europe, (*Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2009); Akil N. Awan, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O' Loughlin, *Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 125; Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalisation of Jihadists: Transforming armed Islamist movements*, (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 5; Joshua Sinai, 'Radicalisation into Extremism and Terrorism', *Intelligencer: Journal of U.S. Intelligence Studies,* Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer/Fall 2012), p. 21; Dirk Baehr, Forthcoming German dissertation on Salafism in Germany, correspondence with author.

[44] This definition is adapted from Alex P. Schmid, 'Glossary and Abbreviations of Terms and Concepts Relating to Terrorism and CounterTerrorism', in Alex P. Schmid (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 678-79).

The above definition covers more ground than many of the existing definitions of radicalisation used by international organisations,[45] governments[46] or think tanks.[85] Importantly, it allows for the fact that radicalisation can take place on either side of a polarised political conflict. Most definitions of radicalisation are much shorter than the above.[86] Yet too much complexity reduction and too high a level of abstraction are not conductive to a better understanding of the phenomenon under consideration.

However, we have to admit that in the final analysis, 'radicalisation' is not just a socio-psychological scientific concept but also a political construct, introduced into the public and academic debate mainly by national security establishments faced with political Islam in general and Salafist Jihadism in particular. The concept was 'pushed' to highlight a relatively narrow, micro-level set of problems related to the causes of terrorism that Western governments faced in their efforts to counter predominantly 'home-grown' terrorism from second and third generation members of Muslim diasporas.[87] This is not, however, to deny that many Western governments made genuine efforts to understand and address legitimate grievances of disadvantaged diaspora members in their societies.

The search for causes of radicalisation among this group of people in diaspora situations has been frustrated by the fact that the reference point of these 'vulnerable youth' is often external to the host society. According to Alison Pargeter, 'much of the politics played out by these various groups and individuals is a direct result of what is occurring in the Islamic world. In fact, Muslim communities in Europe have largely reflected events in the Islamic world or have been shaped by powers outside the continent.'[88] Yet that is not true for all. There are, in fact, four different situations when it comes to Western home-grown terrorism, as Crome and Harrow have pointed out: (i) internal autonomous; (ii) internal affiliated, (iii) external autonomous and (iv) external affiliated. While most internal attacks have some form of external affiliation, there has been a growth in both internal and autonomous terrorist attacks since 2003, according to these authors.[89]

Unfortunately the concept of radicalisation, as used in many government-linked quarters, suffers from politicisation, is fuzzy, applied one-sidedly (only non-state actors are assumed to radicalise, not governments), often lacks a clear benchmark (e.g. adherence to democratic principles and the rule of law, abstaining from the use of violence for political ends), and is linked too readily with terrorism (broadly defined) as outcome. Its broader application to political activism of individuals and movements in societies where social development is blocked by non-democratic extremist regimes is problematic.

This Paper will now turn to a discussion of the state of current research. The reader should by now be aware that radicalisation, like terrorism, too often means different things to different people, sometimes based also on different political interests. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the divergences are not just semantic but in many cases substantive, there is enough common ground to make some statements about where we stand in our knowledge on radicalisation (especially with regard to Muslim diasporas and converts to Salafism in the West) and, as a next step, point out where more research is warranted.

Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America (Washington DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, June 2011), Box 1: Definitions – Key Terms and Concepts.
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   The US Bipartisan Policy Center defines radicalisation as 'the process whereby individuals or groups become political extremists', United States Bipartisan Policy Center, National Security Preparedness Group, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America* (Washington DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, June 2011), Box 1: Definitions – Key Terms and Concepts.
86

45 The European Commission, for instance, defines 'Radicalisation […] as a complex phenomenon of people embracing radical ideology that could lead to the commitment of terrorist acts', thereby stressing too exclusively the role of ideology, EU Website DG Home Affairs, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/crisis-and-terrorism/radicalisation/index_en.htm, accessed 20 July 2012.
46 The British Home Office defined radicalisation as 'the process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism and, in some cases, then to participate in terrorist groups', United States Bipartisan Policy Center National Security Preparedness Group,

D.R. Mandel, for instance, defines radicalisation as 'an increase in and/or reinforcing of extremism in the thinking, sentiments, and/or behaviour of individuals and/or groups of individuals'. David R. Mandel, 'Radicalisation: What does it mean? Thinking, Risk, and Intelligence Group', published in T. Pick & A. Speckhard (Eds.), *Indigenous terrorism: Understanding and addressing the root causes of radicalisation among groups with an immigrant heritage in Europe* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2009).
[87] One of the leading researchers on radicalisation, John Horgan, suggested during a conference of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland on 1 September 2011: 'We should not have allowed to have radicalisation center stage. [...]We are stuck with radicalisation.' He also suggested that the focus on radicalisation may be unnecessary and that the relationship between radicalisation and terrorism is poorly understood. Statement made during conference on radicalisation at START, University of Maryland, 1 September 2011; notes taken from video conference by author.
[88] Allison Pargeter, *New Frontiers of Jihad; Radical Islam in Europe* (Didcot: Marston, 2008), pp. vii-viii.
[89] M. Crone & M. Harrow, 'Homegrown Terrorism in the West', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 23, No. 4 (2011), pp. 521-36. The term 'homegrown' terrorism usually refers to 'domestic' (i.e. national) terrorism perpetrated by individuals born or raised in the country or groups based and operating in their own society or the diaspora sector in it.

What We Think We Know: State of Research on (De-) Radicalisation[90]

Despite a fast-growing number of academic books, articles, chapters, and government and think tank reports on radicalisation, research based on empirical findings is still not very broad. This is partly because the radicals, extremists and terrorists are hard to find and, where they can be found, are often not very cooperative or sincere, but also because the research is often sponsored by their adversaries.[91] Much of the research over the last decade has focused on Islamist radicalisation and the de-radicalisation of jihadist terrorists.[92] At least some of the findings from religious radicals might not be applicable to ethno-nationalist, or left and right-wing militant radicals and extremists.

Despite this uncertainty, there are a number of things that are widely considered as relatively wellestablished knowledge about those who have become radicalised towards terrorism.[93] In the following, a number of these will be identified and discussed:

1. Most terrorists are clinically normal although their acts are considered widely as extra-normal in moral terms;

2. Backgrounds of terrorists are very diverse; there are many paths to terrorism and there is no single profile of a terrorist;

3. Radicalisation is usually a gradual, phased process;

4. Individual poverty alone does not cause radicalisation towards terrorism but un(der)employment may play a role;

5. Grievances play a role but often more as a mobilisation device than as a personal experience;

6. Social networks/environments are crucial in drawing vulnerable youths to a terrorist movement; 7. Ideology often plays an important role in that it can provide the true believer with a 'license to kill';

8. Disengagement from terrorism often occurs without de-radicalisation.

[90] The following sections are an update and expansion of a plenary address delivered by A.P. Schmid at the World Summit on CounterTerrorism held at the ICT in Herzliya, Israel, 11-14 September 2011. [91] Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen noted in 2008: 'The empirical basis for understanding the background factors and trigger events pushing or pulling people towards Islamist militancy is very limited. Moreover, there is no consensus within the research community as to which theories and approaches offer the most promising avenues for further exploration'. A. Dalgaard-Nielsen, *Studying violent radicalization in Europe. Part II: The potential contribution of socio-psychological and psychological approaches (*Copenhagen: DIIS Working Paper no. 2008/3:17). In the same vein Tinka Veldhuis & Jorgen Staun also noted in 2009: 'uncontested empirical material stemming from radicalisation processes of known successful terrorists is very scarce'. Tinka Veldhuis & Jorgen Staun, *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model,* (The Hague: Clingendael, 2009), p. 5. [92] Islamist (de-)radicalisation has been defined by RAND, in this way: *Islamist radicalisation* involves adopting the belief that, to recreate an Islamic state, Muslims must not only adhere to a strict Salafist or ultraconservative interpretation of Islam but also wage jihad, defined as

armed struggle against the enemies of Islam, including non-Muslim nations (especially the United States) and the current rulers of Muslim states who have supplanted God's authority with their own'. *Islamist de-radicalisation* is therefore defined as the process of rejecting this creed, especially its beliefs in the permissibility of using violence against civilians, the excommunication of Muslims who do not adhere to the radicals' views (takfir), and opposition to democracy and concepts of civil liberties as currently understood in democratic societies. Lorenzo Vidino, *Radicalisation, Linkage and Diversity, Current Trends in Terrorism in Europe* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2011). For an alternative definition, see Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalisation of Jihadists: Transforming armed Islamist movements* (London: Routledge: 2010), pp. 56: 'Radicalisation is a process of relative change in which a group undergoes ideological and/or behavioural transformations that lead to the rejection of democratic principles (including the peaceful alternation of power and the legitimacy of ideological and political pluralism) and possibly to the utilisation of violence, or to an increase in the levels of violence, to achieve political goals. *De-radicalisation* is another process of relative change within Islamist movements, one in which a radical group reverses its ideology and de-legitimises the use of violent methods to achieve political goals, while also moving towards an acceptance of gradual social, political and economic changes within a pluralist context. A group undergoing a de-radicalisation process does not have to ideologically abide by democratic principles, whether electoral or liberal, and does not have to participate in an electoral process. De-radicalisation is primarily concerned with changing the attitudes of armed Islamist movements toward violence, rather than toward democracy. Many de-radicalised groups still uphold misogynist, homophobic, xenophobic and anti-democratic views'.
[93]
    Rajaram Satapathy, 'Religious, political, social and criminal are four major causes of terrorism', *The Times of India*, 19 August 2011; Expert Group, *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism: A Concise Report prepared by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation* (Brussels, European Commission, 15 May 2008).

1. Most terrorists are clinically normal although their acts are considered widely as extra-normal in moral terms

One of the more uncomfortable findings of research is that most terrorists appear to be normal in a clinical sense,[47] although their violence clearly violates social norms and is, in this sense, extra-normal. While terrorist groups might also attract 'loonies', for security reasons these would in most cases not be admitted into a terrorist group except perhaps as 'useful idiots' suitable as suicide bombers. However, among 'lone wolf' terrorists, the number of deviant individuals tends to be significantly higher. Some terrorists are 'reborn' or converts – people who feel their previous lives were spoiled or wasted before they joined a terrorist group and became 'true believers' in its cause, which may be connected to a more extremist mind-set.[48]

2. Backgrounds of terrorists are very diverse; there are many paths to terrorism and there is no single profile of a terrorist

Another solid finding is that there is no particular or single type of person that is a terrorist.[49] Just like a soldier can become a war criminal, a militant activist can become an extremist terrorist by crossing a normative line. Given the diversity of contexts of terrorism, it would be surprising if one profile fit all different types of terrorism. For Europe, Petter Nesser has identified some generic social profiles of potential Islamist terrorists. These include legal and illegal immigrants, political refugees, European converts to Islam as well as people with a background in crime and a history of drug addiction.[50] Some are attracted because of the ideology and the thrills of activism. Others are radicalised by personal grievances, problems and frustrations. Yet others are attracted to terrorism by relatives and friends who recruit them for a terrorist organisation.[51]

        Partly based on Nesser's work, fellow Norwegian researcher Tore Bjørgo, created this generic classification regarding the types of participants in groups involved in political violence based on motivations and characteristics:

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[47] Rex A. Hudson, *Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why: The 1999 Government Report on Profiling Terrorists* (Guilford, Conn.: The Lyons Press, 1999) p. 91. Hudson notes: 'Another finding is that the terrorist is not diagnosable psychopathic or mentally sick. Contrary to the stereotype that the terrorist is a psychopath or otherwise mentally disturbed, the terrorist is actually quite sane, although deluded by an ideological or religious way of viewing the world'.

[48] On this aspect, see Eric Hofer (1951), *The True Believer* (New York: Mentor Book).

[49] Homeland Security Institute (2006), op. cit., p. 2; see also Edwin Bakker, *Jihadi terrorists in Europe,* (The Hague: Clingendael, 2006), p. 56: 'The conclusion of this study, that there is no standard jihadist terrorist, has implications for the idea of profiling certain groups of people that are considered likely to commit a terrorist crime. Based on the analysis of the characteristics investigated, such a policy does not promise to be very fruitful'.

[50] Petter Nesser, 'Jihadism in Europe after the Invasion of Iraq: Tracing Motivational Influences from the Iraq War on Jihadism in Western Europe'*, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Vol. 29, No. 4 (2006), p. 327.

[51] Petter Nesser, 'Joining jihadi terrorist cells in Europe: Exploring motivational aspects of recruitment and radicalisation', in Magnus Ranstorp (Ed.), U*nderstanding Violent Radicalisation: Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 108-09. [99] Presentation (undated) by T. Bjørgo, Norwegian Police University College.

1. Ideological activists

    a.   Leaders, motivated by ideology and political issues

    b.   Veterans; role models

    c.   Protégé of the leader

2. Drifters and fellow travellers

    a.   Seekers of friendship, identity and protection

    b.   Converts

3. Socially frustrated youths

    a.   Personal experiences of discrimination or other grievances

    b.   Criminal and marginalised individuals[99]

While this typology is illuminating, its direct applicability for CT policy purposes has yet to be demonstrated. It indicates that different types of personalities are likely to radicalise and join terrorist groups for very different motives. F.M. Moghaddam distinguishes eight specialised roles in terrorist movements: (1) source of inspiration; (2) strategist; (3) networker; (4) [bomb-making] expert; (5) cell manager; (6) local agitator and guide; (7) cell member; and (8) fundraiser.[52]

There are other typologies. US Army Colonel Matt Venhaus, for instance, distinguished among those who join jihadist networks because they are (i) frustrated revenge seekers, (ii) status seekers in search of recognition, (iii) identity seekers with a need to belong to a group, and (iv) thrill seekers looking for adventure.[101] These different types tend to join a terrorist group for different reasons. Clark McCauley and Sophie Moskalenko, based on a comparison of participants in terrorist campaigns from various periods, came up with a dozen mechanisms of radicalisation on the individual and group level, which often work in combinations:

- Individual radicalisation through personal grievance;
- Group grievance;
- Love for one already more radicalised;
- Risk and status, e.g. risk and thrill-seeking;
- Slippery slope – a slow progression of increased radicalisation in which each step becomes a preparation and justification for the next step;
- 'Unfreezing' of old social connections which initiates a search for new sources of connection and meaning in an individual;
- Group polarisation – extremist shift in like-minded groups;
- Group isolation;
- Intergroup competition;
- Jujitsu – using the opponent's strength against him;
- Hate;
- Martyrdom.[53]

One of the important contributions McCauley and Moskalenko made when looking at individual pathways is that 'there are many paths to radicalization that do not involve ideology' although they note that 'ideology can

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[52] Fathali M. Moghaddam, 'De-radicalisation and the Staircase from Terrorism', in David Canter (Ed.), *The Faces of Terrorism: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), p. 281. [101]

    Colonel John Matt Venhaus, *Why Youth Join al-Qaeda*, USIP Special Report 236, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, May 2010), pp. 8-11; available at: http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR236Venhaus.pdf (accessed 22 December 2012).

[53] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction. How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us*, (Oxford: University Press, 2011), pp. 206-214.

be important, however, as a source of justification for violence'.[54] This is echoed in the words of a British government official speaking about the links between individuals and ideology: 'There is no single path that leads people to violent extremism. Social, foreign policy, economic, and personal factors all lead people to throw their lot in with extremists.'[104] Or, as a recent Policy Briefing from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue put it:

> Individuals join as a result of perceived injustice and a need for some form of political activism. They join to meet socio-cultural needs and the desire for social bonding stemming from identity issues. They are looking for meaning, which these groups provide in the form of ideology and higher narrative. There are also those who join for personal advantage, which might include access to criminal networks to enhance income, thrill seeking for those looking for excitement, or redemption for those wanting to atone for previous misdemeanours.[55]

Bjørgo, author of the first (right-wing) de-radicalisation/disengagement programmes in Scandinavia in the 1990s called EXIT, concluded 'Different types of participants require different preventive measures to prevent radicalisation and encourage disengagement. One size does not fit them all!'[56]

3. Radicalisation is usually a gradual, phased process

It has sometimes been noted by intelligence agencies that radicalisation can take place very fast.[57] This is not necessarily so: only the last observed phase might be fast when at last a dangerous person comes to the notice of intelligence agencies. The incubation period underlying radicalisation often lasts months and usually years – although there are exceptions to this rule.[108]

There are many models depicting the process of radicalisation. One of the first models was developed by Randy Borum in 2003. It lists four steps of radicalisation to terrorism:

1. Recognition by the pre-radicalised individual or group that an event or condition is wrong ('it's not right');
2. This is followed with a framing of the event or condition as selectively unjust ('it's not fair');
3. The third step occurs when others are held responsible for the perceived injustice ('it's your fault');
4. The final step involves the demonization of the 'other' ('you're evil').[58]

An influential model has been the one of Quintan Wiktorowicz who, in 2005, introduced the notion of a 'cognitive opening' – the moment when an individual who has been trying to make sense of his or her existence suddenly sees the light, exchanging an old view of the world for one considered more true.[59] Studying a broad range of British Muslim extremists, Wiktorowicz found that it was not the most knowledgeable in Islamic theology that were vulnerable to radicalisation but those who had only a superficial religious background.[60]

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[54] Ibid. p. 220. [104]
   Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Presidential Task Force on Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism, "*Rewriting the Narrative. An Integrated Strategy for Counterterrorism*" (Washington, DC: Washington Institute, March 2009), p.12.

[55] Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Policy Briefing, *Tackling Extremism: De-radicalisation and Disengagement* (Copenhagen ISD, 2012), p. 3; available online at: http://www.strategicdialogue.org/allnewmats/DeRadPaper2012.pdf .

[56] T. Bjørgo, 'Types of violent activists and their diverse pathways of radicalisation and disengagement', PowerPoint presentation. Oslo: Police Academy, not dated.

[57] Communication by high-level national intelligence service official during an academic seminar at the University of St. Andrews (2007). [108]
   US Bipartisan Policy Center (2011), op. cit. (note 87), p. 3.

[58] R. Borum (July 2003), 'Understanding the terrorist mindset',. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin,* 72 (7), pp. 7-10.

[59] Q. Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*, (Lanham, Md.: Lowman & Littlefield), 2005.

[60] Dina Temple-Raston, 'New Terrorism Advisor Takes A "Broad Tent" Approach', *National Public Radio*, 24 January 2011; at http://www.npr.org/2011/01/24/133125267/new-terrorism-adviser-takes-a-broad-tent-approach; accessed 30 October 2012.
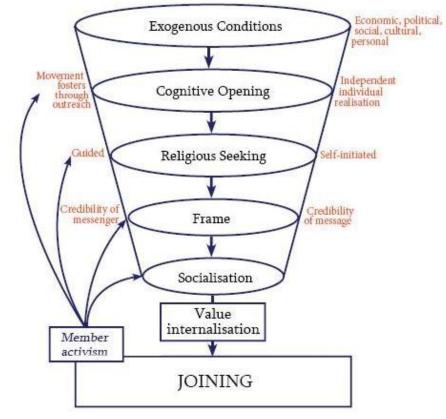
Fig. 1. Wiktorowicz's diagram for joining extremist or terrorist groups[61]

Another model, developed by Joshua Sinai in 2012, divides the trajectory into three distinct phases: (i) Radicalisation, (ii) Mobilisation (a form of active engagement) and (iii) Action (i.e. terrorism). For the Radicalisation phase, Sinai identifies six groups of factors:

1. Personal factors, such as a cognitive opening which takes the form of a seeking of an empowering religious or political ideology that addresses the individual's concerns;
2. Political and socioeconomic factors, such as a perception that one is being discriminated against;
3. Ideological factors which are crucial but insufficient by themselves;
4. Community factors such as the presence of extremist subcultures within one's local community; 5. Group factors, such as the presence of an extremist gateway organization in one's community;
6. Enabling factors that provide means and opportunity to become an extremist.

The next phase in Sinai's model – Mobilisation – is reached when certain catalysts in the form of 'triggers' drive the vulnerable individual further along the path and he or she is not held back by inhibitors. Sinai describes the Mobilisation's active phase as consisting of three primary components: (i) opportunity (e.g. contacts to a terrorist group), (ii) capability (e.g. training in the use of arms), and (iii) readiness to act on behalf of a terrorist group. Finally, there is the Action phase of target selection and the actual terrorist attack.[62]

A sophisticated model is the staircase model developed by Fathali M. Assaf Moghadam in 2009 for Islamic communities in both Western and non-Western societies. He uses the metaphor of a narrowing staircase leading

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[61] Alejandro J. Beutel, *Building Bridges to Strengthen America: Forging an Effective Counterterrorism Enterprise between Muslim Americans and Law Enforcement,* (Muslim Public Affairs Council: November 2009) p. 9. Available online at http://buildingbridgeswny.org/articles/MPAC-Counter-Radicalization-Paper.pdf
[62] Joshua Sinai, 'Radicalisation into Extremism and Terrorism: A Conceptual Model', *The Intelligencer,* Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer/Fall 2012), pp. 22-3.

step-by-step to the top of a building, having a ground floor and five higher floors to represent each phase in the radicalisation process that, at the top floor, ends in an act of terrorism. The ground floor, inhabited by more than one billion Muslims worldwide, stands for a cognitive analysis of the structural circumstances in which the individual Muslim finds him- or herself. Here, the individual asks him- or herself questions like 'am I being treated fairly?' The individual begins to interpret an ascribed causality to what he or she deems to be unjust. According to Moghaddam, most people find themselves on this 'foundational level'. Some individuals who are very dissatisfied move up to the first floor in search for a change in their situation. On the first floor, one finds individuals who are actively seeking to remedy those circumstances they perceive to be unjust. Some of them might find that paths to individual upward social mobility are blocked, that their voices of protest are silenced and that there is no access to participation in decision-making. They tend to move up to the second floor, where these individuals are directed toward external targets for displacement of aggression. He or she begins to place blame for injustice on out-groups such as Israel and the US. Some are radicalised in mosques and other meeting places of Muslims and move to the third floor on the staircase to terrorism. This phase involves a moral disengagement from society and a moral engagement within the nascent terrorist organisation. Within this phase, values are constructed which rationalise the use of violence by the terrorists while simultaneously decrying the moral authority of the incumbent regime. A smaller group moves up the narrowing staircase to the fourth floor, where the legitimacy of terrorist organisations is accepted more strongly. Here the attitude is: 'you are either with us or against us'. They begin to be incorporated into the organisational and value structures of terrorist organisations. Some are recruited to take the last steps on the staircase and commit acts of terrorism when reaching the top fifth floor.[63]

Danish researcher Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, summarising socio-psychological and psychological approaches to the study of radicalisation in Europe looking at the phenomenon from a personal individual perspective, identified six stages:

1. Identifying a problem as not just a misfortune, but an injustice;
2. Constructing a moral justification for violence (religious, ideological, political);
3. Blaming the victims ('it is their own fault');
4. Dehumanising the [targeted] victims through suggestive language and derogative symbols;
5. Displacing responsibility (God or other authorities ordered the individual to commit the act of violence) or diffusing responsibility (the group, not the individual, is responsible);
6. Mis-constructing or minimising the harmful effects (by using euphemisms or by contrasting to other acts which are worse).[64]

Common to several such models is the phenomenon of (perceived) relative deprivation, the search for identity, and sometimes also the assumed presence of certain personality traits in radicalised individuals.[65]

Such phase or stage models generally have one important drawback: they were constructed on the basis of relatively few cases where young men (and more seldom women) actually ended up as (Islamist) terrorists, neglecting all those individuals in similar situations who did not go through all of these stages despite similar starting positions, for example a crisis of identity.[117] Moghaddam's Staircase Model however, manages to accommodate that problem to some extent.

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[63] F.M. Moghadam, 'De-radicalisation and the Staircase from Terrorism', in David Canter (Ed.), *The Faces of Terrorism: Multidisciplinary Perspective* (New York: John Wiley, 2009), pp. 278-79.

[64] Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, 'Violent Radicalisation in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 33 (2010), p. 799; Dalgaard-Nielsen, A., *Studying violent radicalization in Europe, Part II: The potential contribution of sociopsychological and psychological approaches* (Copenhagen: DIIS Working Paper, March 2008/3:10).

[65] M. King, & D. M. Taylor, 'The radicalisation of homegrown jihadists: A review of theoretical models and social-psychological evidence', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 23, No. 4 (2011), pp. 602-22. [117]

[117] T. Veldhuis and J. Staun correctly noted: 'Just as it is impossible to explain the outbreak of revolutions by studying only revolutions [...] it is impossible to explain radicalisation only by cases of radicalisation. Phase models, however, do exactly this. They select observations of 'successful' radicalisation and start reasoning backwards to describe the radicalisation process which these radicals have presumably gone through. This selection procedure will produce biased results.' T. Veldhuis and J. Staun (2009), op. cit., p. 17.

4. Individual poverty alone does not cause terrorism but un(der)employment may play a role

The fact is that empirical research has not been able to establish a direct link between collective or individual poverty and terrorism.[66] In other words, this is a myth or at best a half-truth. However, in some countries unemployment has been a motive for some young men to join terrorist groups.[67] Tinka Veldhuis and Jorgen Staun noted that 'the demographic profiles of radical Muslims in the Western world show that they are generally not poor, religiously fanatic, or desperate due to suffering from extreme poverty, political oppression, or other deprived circumstances.'[68] Jessica Stern, who interviewed terrorists in prison, also noted that 'terrorists come from all socio-economic backgrounds. For poor people in countries where economic prospects are bleak (e.g. Somalia, northern Nigeria), Jihad can, however, be one of the few job options available.'[69] In many of these cases, ideological radicalisation comes only after joining a group and partaking in various illegal activities – if at all.

The disenfranchised are generally too poor and too concerned with mere survival to start rebellions. However, some of them might join terrorist groups, attracted by the prospect of money, having a gun or simply because they have nothing to lose. Some researchers have therefore advocated the use of development policies to address socio-economic grievances, corruption and bad governance that might give rise to terrorism. Such policies should, however, be implemented in their own right and not as part of CT policies. Their impact on levels of terrorism is relatively uncertain and, at any rate, would not deliver short-term results.

5.   Grievances play an important role but often more as mobilisation device than as a personal experience.

Individual and group grievances are widespread in many societies and can be used as a mobilising instrument. A sense of injustice is a very powerful motivating factor that can make individuals join militant groups. A report by the Change Institute, based on an analysis of terrorist movements, concluded that 'grievances, real or perceived, inform the employment of violence'.[122] However, there is so much injustice in the world and there are, relatively speaking, so few terrorists, that grievances alone cannot explain radicalisation to terrorism. It needs a trigger event or 'cognitive opening' linking grievances to an enemy who is held responsible for them or who is deemed to stand in the way of removing the cause of the grievance.

What is particularly noticeable, however, is that terrorist groups sometimes adopt somebody else's grievances and become self-appointed champions of a cause other than their own. Such 'vicarious grievances' are based on altruistic feelings whereby one identifies with the fate of an adopted constituency and acts on its behalf. In this context, Khosrokhavar speaks about 'humiliation by proxy'.[123] Terrorist leaders, who often come from middle- or upper-class backgrounds, adopt grievances and use them as a mobilisation device. An American report noted: 'Some young Muslims respond to the radicaliser's message because they feel excluded from their societies, trapped as they are in poverty or hopelessness within authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and beyond. Others, well-off and well-educated, live in Western democratic nations, but struggle with issues of belonging and identity and find that the radical message resonates with their experience and circumstances.'[124] White found that 'mobilisation is engineered and/or facilitated by networks, not by grievances in themselves – only about half the

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[66] See Jitka Maleckova, 'Impoverished terrorists: stereotype or reality?', in Tore Bjørgo (Ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, reality and ways forward* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 33-42.

[67] Medhurst refers to a study among Kashmiri guerrilla fighters and terrorists that showed that 24% of them did join an armed group due to unemployment. Medhurst found that 15% of the militants in Jammu and Kashmir joined a guerrilla or terrorist organisation due to 'force or threat', 10% due to 'Peer/Family Pressure', 12% due to 'Gentle Persuasion', 10% due to 'Attraction', 20% due to 'Religious/Political Conviction', 0.25% due to 'Enemy/Agent', 8.75% were 'Opportunists' and 24% 'Jobless'. Medhurst (who served with UN peacekeepers in Kashmir) wrote: 'It can be concluded from the statistics shown that the most common profile of a fully-trained guerrilla/terrorist in the Jammu and Kashmir conflict is that of a 21 to 25 year old, of high school education, a labourer by occupation, who became a guerrillaterrorist as a result of being unemployed'. P. Medhurst, *Global Terrorism* (New York, UNITAR, 2000).

[68] Tinka Veldhuis & Jorgen Staun, Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model (The Hague: Clingendael, 2009), p. 8.

[69] J. Stern further noted: 'Of the 25,000 insurgent and terrorism suspects detained by U.S. forces in Iraq as of 2007, nearly all were previously underemployed, according to Maj. General Douglas Stone, the commander of detainee operations at the time. And according to the late Christopher Boucek of the Carnegie Endowment, the Saudi Interior Ministry found that most of one group of 639 convicted terrorists going through a rehabilitation program came from lower- or middle-class family, while 3% had high-income backgrounds'. J. Stern, Op Ed piece, 'Five myths about who becomes a terrorist', *Washington Post* (10 January 2010).

interviewees, according to their own statements, had been aware of the grievances faced by Catholics in Northern Ireland prior to joining groups or networks supportive of the IRA's cause.'[125] In short: grievances alone are not sufficient for becoming a radical. Other factors include, as Jamie Barlett and Carl Miller point out, (1) the emotional pull to act in the face of injustice, (2) thrill, excitement, and coolness, (3) status and internal code of honour, and (4) peer pressure.[126]

A case study on young men who joined al-Shabab (based on a small, and therefore probably statistically unrepresentative sample) identified these pull and push factors:

> Push factors are the negative social, cultural, and political features of one's societal environment that aid in 'pushing' vulnerable individuals onto the path of violent extremism. Push factors are what are commonly known as 'underlying/root causes' such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination, and political/economical marginalization. Pull factors, on the other hand, are the positive characteristics and benefits of an extremist organisation that 'pull' vulnerable individuals to join. These include the group's ideology (e.g., emphasis on changing one's condition through violence rather than 'apathetic' and 'passive' democratic means), strong bonds of brotherhood and sense of belonging, reputation building, prospect of fame or glory, and other socialization benefits. The participants unanimously stated that it was a confluence of factors that led them to join al-Shabab, as the group presented a 'package' deal in its recruitment propaganda.[127]

6.   Social networks/environments are crucial in drawing vulnerable youths to a terrorist movement The importance of social networks and enabling environments has now been widely acknowledged. Social and kinship relationships are crucial in drawing vulnerable youths into a terrorist group.[128] The process appears to be

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[122]
  The Change Institute Security and Counter-Terrorism, *Studies on Violent Radicalisation* (London: CI, January 2009), p.2. The authors add, however: 'Additionally ideology and narratives play a multiple role'. (ibid.)
[123]
  Tinka Veldhuis & Jorgen Staun, *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model* (The Hague: Clingendael, 2009), p. 8.
[124]
  United States Presidential Task Force on Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism, *Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counter radicalisation* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 2009), p. 4.
[125]
  Robert W. White, 'Political Violence by the Non-aggrieved: Explaining the Political Participation of Those with no Apparent Grievances', in *Social Movements and Violence*, edited by D. della Porta (London: JAI Press 1992), pp. 82-93; Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, *Studying Violent Radicalisation in Europe I. The Potential Contribution of Social Movement Theory* (Copenhagen: DIIS, 2008) (DIIS Working Paper no. 2008/2), p. 5. [126]
  J. Bartlett,& C. Miller, 'The edge of violence: Towards telling the difference between violent and non-violent radicalisation', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012), pp. 1-21. [127]
  Muhsin Hassan, 'Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of al-Shabab and Somali Youth', *CTC Sentinel* (23 August 2012).
[128]
  Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 2004.

similar to the one we can also see in street gangs and religious cults. Radicalisation often follows recruitment into such groups rather than preceding it.[70] A recent US Bipartisan Policy Report noted: 'Also important are social and group dynamics, given that radicalisation often happens in 'dense, small networks of friends', and that extremist ideas are more likely to resonate if they are articulated by a credible or charismatic leader'.[71]

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[70] Tore Bjørgo, 'Processes of Disengagement from Violent Groups of the Extreme Right,' in T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (Abington: Routledge, 2009); N. Chowdhury and Hamid El-Said, *Transforming Terrorists: Examining International Efforts to Address Violent Extremism* (New York: International Peace Institute, May 2011), p. 17; Magnus Ranstorp (Ed.), *Understanding Violent Radicalisation. Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe* (London: Routledge 2010), p. 7.
[71] US Bipartisan Policy Center, National Security Preparedness Group, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America* (Washington, D.C.: Bipartisan Policy Center, 2011), p. 1. This report noted: 'One [driver] is the perception of *grievance* – conflicting identities, injustice, oppression, or socio-economic exclusion, for example – which can make people receptive to extremist ideas'.

It has been observed that it is '[a] combination of push and pull factors [that] account for why people either join or leave extremists networks'. [72] The existence of radical milieus, whether in a concrete neighbourhood or in the virtual social space of the Internet can be such a point of attraction for vulnerable young people in search of comradeship, a new role, identity and status, especially when push factors like discrimination, marginalisation and humiliation experienced in the family, school, neighbourhood and society contribute to a break with a past that is experienced as intolerable.[73] Petter Nesser, in his dissertation on patterns in Islamist terrorist cell formation and behaviour in Europe in the period 1995-2010, concluded:

> The typical recruitment pattern was that frustrated immigrants became emotionally affected by wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir, Chechnya, Bosnia and Algeria, before becoming drawn into organized support networks in Europe by recruiters. In many cases the radicalization of core members was triggered by moral shock, typically caused by gruesome movies showing atrocities against Muslims in Chechnya, Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq, Recruits were exposed to such movies via propaganda materials supplied by recruiters or mainstream media. Influenced by shocking imagery and religious doctrine, recruits ended up as new-born believers, embracing the militaristic messages of jihadist ideologues with the fervour of converts.[133]

Given the fact that local circumstances frequently contribute to radicalisation, solutions have to be found in the first instance on the local community level.[134] A first step is often to search for possible indicators of radicalisation. With regard to individual radicalisation to jihadist terrorism, the German federal state of Brandenburg developed the following list of possible indicators:

- Visible changes in style of clothing and behaviour;
- Break with their own family and turn to 'new friends';
- Religion becomes an explanation for everything and is constantly referred to;
- Other Muslims who do not follow strict religious practices are denounced as unbelievers;
- Participation in combat sports and survival training;
- Fraud and other criminal activities against non-believers;
- Participation in religious seminars of radical preachers;
- Visit of jihadist websites and viewing of jihadist videos;
- Taking of language lessons followed by trips abroad;
- Efforts to evade detection (loss of passport, etc.);
- Sudden change back to Western clothes, partying before the attack.[74]

Such indicator lists tend to be often general and vague as each indicator applies to many more people than the actual small group of people on the path to Jihadism. However, in combination, they can have predictive power to identify potential suspects who might merit closer surveillance.

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[72] Institute for Strategic Dialogue, *Tackling Extremism: De-Radicalisation and Disengagement* (Copenhagen: Conference Report, 8-9 May 2012), p. 10.

[73] Ibid.

[133] Petter Nesser, *Jihad in Europe: Patterns in Islamist terrorist cell formation and behaviour, 1995-2010* (Oslo: University of Oslo PhD Thesis, 2012), p. 518. [134] United States, The White House, Executive Office of the President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 2011).

[74] Ministry of the Interior of Brandenburg, Germany; Astrid Boetticher & Miroslav Mares, *Extremismus. Theories – Konzepte – Formen* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), pp. 256-7. A similar, more detailed, list has also been made by the authorities of Lower Saxony; see Niedersachsen, *Radikalisierungsprozesse im Bereich des Islamistischen Extremismus und Terrorismus* (Juli 2012), pp. 23-4.

7. Ideology often plays an important role in that it can provide the true believers with a license to kill In recent years the role of radical narratives – how terrorists see the situation – has emerged as an important dimension in explaining radicalisation. [75] The report of the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation noted that:

> Ideology appears as an important and constant factor in the radicalisation process towards terrorism. Ideological indoctrination plays a crucial role in turning a small but significant minority dissatisfied with existing social and political arrangements into militants. Ideology contributes to the acceptance of violence as a method to bring about political change and also leads to the creation of a subculture of violence. Ideology is used to reduce potential moral inhibitors and to justify the resort to extreme methods from a broader repertoire of methods of waging political conflict. Cognitive frameworks derived from certain exclusive ideologies have been used to build collective identities based on narratives of violent struggle. [76]

Similar findings have been reported elsewhere. [138] A report of the British Change Institute concluded that 'violent radical narratives may call on the common narratives in efforts to create new constituencies but also reframe them and promote an ideological coherence and interpretative power via an 'ideational framework'. [77]

Yet ideology as a mechanism for radicalisation is important only for some (e.g. violent entrepreneurs) and not for others who are ideologically unsophisticated if not downright indifferent to elaborate ideas. Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko correctly noted that 'there are many paths to radicalisation that do not involve ideology. Some join a radical group for thrills and status, some for love, some for connection and comradeship. Personal and group grievances can move individuals toward violence, with ideology serving only to rationalise the violence.' [78] Right-wing militants who become terrorists often have little ideological baggage and even among religious terrorists theological knowledge is thin and generally skewed. A felt need to take revenge is often the primary driver and ideology sometimes comes in only later as rationalisation. Situational factors (e.g. the presence of a certain core milieu or at least a network of radical individuals) often trump other ideological factors in driving young activists to greater militancy and ultimately terrorism. Under different circumstances, some of those recruited might have joined a criminal gang, a religious sect or even the armed forces of their country. Many of them had little room for choosing one side or the other. While it is difficult if not downright impossible to make individual predictions where a young person might end up, we can identify generic risk factors that make one choice more likely than others. Once these are identified and the mechanisms of recruitment are known, it is possible to do some 'social engineering' that has a reasonable prospect of success for many – not all – who are vulnerable to the terrorist temptation.

It is important to understand the way extremist ideas and beliefs translate into terrorist actions. We still lack good answers to this question. However, we know that in a number of cases such beliefs might at times also come after recruitment – if at all. The study of processes of engagement with (semi-)clandestine groups and disengagement from them is handicapped by the fact that it is often difficult to find many people who have gone through such experiences and are willing to talk openly and honestly about it.

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[75] See for instance, Jeffry R. Halverson, H.L. Goodall, Jr., and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011*; E.J.A.M. Kessels (Ed)., *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives* (The Hague, National Coordinator for CounterTerrorism, 2010).

[76] nd
Reprinted in R. Coolsaet (Ed.), J*ihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge. European and American Experiences,* 2   ed., (Farnham: Ashate, 2011), pp. 269-88. [138]
US Bipartisan Policy Center, *National Security Preparedness Group, Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America* (Washington, DC.: Bipartisan Policy Center, 2009), Chapter 2. It reported 'A recent US government report also noted 'Another [driver] is the adoption of an *extremist narrative* or *ideology* that speaks to the grievance and provides a compelling rationale for what needs to be done' (Ibid., p. 1).

[77] The Change Institute, *Security and Counter-Terrorism: Studies on Violent Radicalisation* (London: CI, January 2009), p. 3.

[78] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, 'Individual and Group Mechanisms of Radicalisation', in Sarah Canna (Ed.) *Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats: Current Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counter-radicalisation and Disengagement* (College Park: START, January 2011), p. 89.

8. Disengagement from terrorism often occurs without de-radicalisation

In popular understanding, de-radicalisation is often assumed to be the same as disengagement from a terrorist group and its ideology. However, the term de-radicalisation refers primarily to a cognitive rejection of certain values, attitudes and views – in other words, a change of mind. While one is inclined to think that deradicalisation comes first and disengagement – behavioural distancing from the violent terrorist modus operandi – comes afterwards, this is not necessarily so. John Horgan and Tore Bjørgo have argued convincingly that 'there is no clear evidence to suggest that disengagement from terrorism may bring with it de-radicalisation, nor (and perhaps more controversially) is there clear evidence to support the argument that de-radicalisation is a necessary accompaniment to disengagement.'[79] It appears that most ex-terrorists have not so much changed their cognitive framework than their actual behaviour. In other words, disengagement without de-radicalisation might be the rule rather than the exception. John Horgan, having conducted dozens of interviews with former terrorists since 2006, concluded that 'while almost all of the interviewees could be described as disengaged, not a single one of them could be said to be de-radicalised'.[80]

Only in a few cases can one observe a simultaneous de-radicalisation and disengagement. Disengagement can take many forms: desertion or defection of individuals as with the Italian *pentiti* in the 1980s or, as a collective process, demobilisation as we saw it for instance in Northern Ireland with the Provisional IRA after the Good Friday agreement of 1998. Like radicalisation, disengagement on the group level has also been conceptualised as a stage- or phase process. It starts often with:

1. Declarative disengagement; followed by
2. Behavioural disengagement; followed by
3. Organisational disengagement (leaving the group); followed at the very end by
4. De-radicalisation.[81]

Disengagement on the level of the individual 'lone wolf' tends to be an invisible process about which we know little, although disillusionment in one form or another probably also plays a big role, as it does with those who are members of a terrorist cell or a broad semi-clandestine organisation.

On the whole, what we know for sure about radicalisation, extremism and terrorism on the individual and group level is still limited and generalisations across countries and cultures are problematic. For those readers who think that we know for sure much more than is contained in these eight points, here is a salutary reminder: recently, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland concluded a major study on what is known about Violent Extremist Organisations (VEO) and how to counter them. This study tried to test more than 180 more or less plausible hypotheses about influencing VEOs, ranging from using positive incentives to punitive actions. For each of the 183 popular and/or academic assertions regarding what works against VEOs, the amount and quality of the empirical evidence available was assessed, drawing on a very broad range of literature. It turned out that for 50 hypotheses circulating in the public domain as to how to cope with VEOs, there was not any relevant empirical evidence in support or contradiction of the assertion. Another 57 of the hypotheses had multiple qualitative and/or quantitative findings to back them up but

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[79] T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (Abington: Routledge, 2009), p.28. Horgan argued elsewhere: '[…] individual disengagement from terrorism may be, broadly speaking, the result of an *individual* or *collective* process (or some combination of both). It may stem from experiences as diverse as role change, attitudinal shift, and may or may not result in the kind of 'reorientation in outlook' described by Garfield. We can identify both *psychological* and *physical* dimensions of disengagement. Further complicating matters, we might think of disengagement as broadly *voluntary* in origin[…] or *involuntary* […]'. John Horgan, 'De-radicalisation or Disengagement? A Process in Need of Clarity and a Counterterrorism Initiative in Need of Evaluation', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. II, No. 4 (2010) p. 6. One of his conclusions is: 'there is no evidence to suggest that *disengagement* from terrorism may result in *de-radicalisation*.' He also suggests that with regard to existing de-radicalisation programmes we still need evidence-based answers to the question: 'do they actually work (and *why*)?'. Ibid. p. 11.
[80] J. Horgan, De-radicalisation or Disengagement? *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2010), op. cit. (note 139).
[81] Gordon Clubb, 'Re-evaluating the Disengagement Process: the Case of Fatah', *Perspectives on Terrorism,* Vol. 3, No. 3 (2009).

came up with contradictory conclusions. Among the 183 hypotheses, there were nine relating to de-radicalisation. They received various levels of empirical support in quantitative and qualitative studies. On a scale of 0 - 9 (nine meaning much empirical support), they scored as follows:

Hypothesis	Score
1. De-radicalisation efforts using religious arguments are relatively more effective in rural areas; in urban areas efforts to disengage will be more fruitful;	0
2. Applying pressure to a radical Islamist VEO with 'no clear Charismatic leader' will lead to fractures in the group; subsequently some groups will de-radicalise while others will not;	3
3. De-radicalisation programmes can reduce VEO activity;	3
4. VEO de-radicalisation/disengagement 'initiated at the top' is more likely to succeed if accompanied by 'inducements by the state';	4
5. VEO de-radicalisation/disengagement initiated at the top is more likely to succeed if accompanied by 'internal interactions between leadership and members of the movement' [bottom up feedback];	4
6. Social interaction between the VEO and the 'other' helps chances for deradicalisation;	5
7. De-radicalisation/disengagment is more likely to succeed when efforts are initiated by the VEO leadership;	5
8. De-radicalisation/disengagement of VEO actors is often preceded by a traumatic/significant event;	5
9. The more psychological and emotional support that an ex-member of a militant group has access to post de-radicalisation/disengagement, the less likely he/she is to rejoin the extremist group in the future;	5
10. On the whole, positive inducements seem more effective than negative ones in de-radicalising/disengaging.	9

Table 2: Empirical evidence in support of ten hypotheses on de-radicalisation[82]

On a more general level on how to deal with VEOs, the START study found that only six hypotheses out of 183 received the highest level of empirical support (nine of a scale of 0 - 9). These were (including hypothesis 10 of the table above which is item 4 below):

1. If the adversary sees there are no benefits to restraint, it will work against the deterring party;
2. In a country/issue context with multiple VEOs, negotiating with one VEO may lead to increased bad behaviour by VEOs left out of negotiations;
3. Metal detectors and increased law enforcement at airports decreased hijackings;
4. On the whole, positive inducements seem more effective than negative ones in de-radicalising/ disengaging;
5. Political reform can lower VEO activity;
6. VEO 'targeting errors' can lead to erosion of popular support for the group.

START's Influencing Violent Extremist Organisations (I-VEO) Knowledge Matrix [83] discusses and meticulously documents the available empirical evidence for or against the 183 hypotheses. It is a rich (and sobering) description of research results, exemplifying that the research community still has a long way to go to understand the complexity of the object under investigation.

What We Ought to Know Better About (De-)Radicalisation

While we know more about radicalisation and its causes than eight years ago, there are still many known unknowns. Part of this has to do with the fact that, as pointed out at the beginning of this review, there is a lack of consensus as to what exactly we should label 'radicalisation'. This has prevented much research from becoming fully cumulative.[84] If radicalisation is, as proposed above, defined as movement away from moderate or mainstream attitudes and often also from adherence to democratic procedures towards far-out positions of violent extremism, it is a relative, context-specific concept whose application for non-Western authoritarian and dictatorial regimes (where a change of government by fair elections is not possible) is problematic.

There are still major gaps in our knowledge and experts disagree sometimes about basic issues: some (e.g. Bruce Hoffman) see radicalisation mainly as a top-down process where a radicaliser – for instance an itinerant imam or a battle-hardened veteran from the Afghan war of the 1980s against the Soviet Union – mobilises vulnerable youths and turns them into followers. Others (e.g. Marc Sageman) see radicalisation primarily as a bottom-up process in which individual self-starters or a small 'bunch of guys' of home-grown radicals search for an organisation that allows them to follow a mission larger than themselves.[85] The bottom-up model appears, in the view of this writer, to be generally the more appropriate for understanding many radicalisation processes in Western diasporas but the two models co-exist to some extent. However, both types of models suffer from the fact that radicalisation

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[82] START, Influencing Violent Extremist Organisations (I-VEO) Knowledge Matrix, available online at http://st art.foxtrotdev.com/.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Tinka Veldhuis & Jorgen Staun, (2009) op. cit., p. 4, noted: 'a universally accepted definition of the concept [of radicalisation] is still to be developed'.
[85] For a discussion of such models, see T. Veldhuis and J. Staun (2009), op. cit., p. 2 and pp. 14-20. See also Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, 'Individual and Group Mechanisms of Radicalisation', in Sarah Canna (Ed.), *Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats: Current Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counterradicalisation and Disengagement* (College Park, Maryland: START, January 2011), p. 82.

is explained by studying only cases where individuals radicalised, with no control group of people in similar circumstances who did not undergo radicalisation.[86]

Here is a list of questions that point to several areas where our knowledge is insufficient and where more research is called for:

1. Why do many share background characteristics of terrorists without becoming terrorist themselves?
2. Why are well-educated, affluent and apparently well-integrated individuals also susceptible to radicalisation?
3. Who is most vulnerable to radicalisation?
4. What is the role of the Internet in radicalisation?
5. Is Islamist radicalisation different from other, more secular forms of radicalisation?
6. Are certain types of counter-terrorism and repression causing (further) radicalisation?
7. Is radicalisation taking place on both sides: among the defenders as well as the attackers?

1. Why do so many share background characteristics of terrorists without becoming terrorist themselves?

Perhaps the greatest mystery is why so many people exposed to the same or similar external enabling environments as those who become terrorists, do not radicalise fully or at any rate not enough to become terrorists. While worldwide, more than 100,000 suspected Islamist terrorists are in custody, and some 35,000 have been convicted of terrorist crimes,[87] there are tens of millions of mainly young males who might have been wronged or humiliated as much or more as those who became terrorists. Yet they did not become terrorists. Why not? Charles Kurzmann noted:

> For several decades now, Islamist terrorists have called it a duty for Muslims to engage in armed jihad – against their own rulers, against the Soviets, and later against the Americans. Tens of thousands have obeyed, perhaps as many as 100,000 over the past quarter century, according to US. Government estimates of the size of terrorist groups.[...] At the same time, more than a billion Muslims – well over 99 percent – ignored the call to action. [...] Global Islamist terrorists have managed to recruit fewer than 1 in 15,000 Muslims over the past quarter century and fewer than 1 in 100,000 Muslims since 9/11.[88]

Tentative answers to the question 'what distinguishes the many who resist the lure of cognitive radicalism and violent extremism from the few who do not?' have been given. They include observations such as:

- The majority of them have stronger and better ties to family, friends, and the community;
- They live in a pluralist but cohesive society;
- They have been exposed to counter-ideological narratives;
- They have a settled understanding of religion;
- There exist non-violent outlets for expressing their frustrations.[89]

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[86] One of the few studies that introduces a non-violent control group is J. Barlett & C. Miller, 'The edge of violence: Towards telling the difference between violent and non-violent radicalisation', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 24 (1) (2012), pp. 1-21. However, the control group does not consist of apolitical, non-activist or apathetic young people who do not become radicalised; it consists of non-violent radicals.
[87] Arie W. Kruglanski, Michele Gelfand, and Rohan Gunaratna, 'Detainee De-radicalisation: A Challenge for Psychological Science', *Observer* (Association for Psychological Science), Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 2010), p. 1.
[88] Charles Kurzman, *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), p. 11.
[89] US Bipartisan Policy Center (2011), op. cit., p. 3. See also Charles Kurzman, T*he Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists,* (Oxford: University Press, 2011).

Many people also tend to side with what the majority of other people do or do not do. We will only have good answers to this question if research is conducted not only on terrorists, but also on control groups that share many of the same characteristics as deemed 'typical' for terrorists themselves. And we also need to look 'on the other side of the hill' – the nature and effects of government (counter-)measures and the various groups, including the radical milieu, that influence them.

2. Why are well-educated, affluent and apparently well-integrated individuals also susceptible to radicalisation?

Again, there is no easy answer. However, in history – for example in the Russia of the 1870s and 1880s – terrorism had often been the mode of fighting for middle and upper class students who tried but failed to connect to unresponsive masses. Coming from more affluent backgrounds, they often broke with their parents and their social class and embraced a constituency different from their own and championed its cause. Gilles Kepel, writing in the mid-1990s, noted that the avant-garde of fundamentalists consisted of university students who had received a higher education but at the same time knew that they would not find a job based on it.[90] Universities, more than madrassas, are hotbeds of radicalisation, yet no major comparative research has, to the knowledge of this author, been done on radicalisation at universities.

Lenin once called terrorism 'the mode of fighting of the intelligentsia'. It is a line of thought that has been explored by Richard Rubenstein who argued that:

> [T]errorism, as opposed to other forms of protest or resistance, is produced by a social and moral crisis of the intelligentsia; that serious terrorist movements have local roots and are not mere products of outside manipulation […] that most terrorists are not insane fanatics, career criminals, or government hirelings, but moral people driven to extremes by their situation and by mistaken political conceptions. […] Where militant political movements are not massive, and where mass movements are not militant, terrorism may seem to be the only way of keeping faith.[91]

The choice for a radical career can be determined by a number of factors. Bartlett and Miller in their comparative study of violent and non-violent radicals, found that:

> [P]articularly in cases of 'home-grown' young militants, […] violent radicalisation is not necessarily, or wholly, a religious, intellectual, or rational decision. There is an emotional pull to radicalisation. To join the battle against the power and authority of Western states is considered risky, exciting, heroic, and taps into a counter-cultural and anti-establishment tradition exemplified by many youth subcultures, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Further, in-group peer pressure and an internal code of honour can render violence, in certain social contexts, the most obvious route to accrue status, respect, and meaning.[92]

3. Who is most vulnerable to radicalisation?

We know that people in prison are very vulnerable because many of them find themselves in some kind of existential crisis.[93] They need comradeship and support which a gang, religious belief system or a combination of the two can provide. Beyond prison populations, and, in the case of Western Europe, beyond first or second

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[90] Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994); G. Kepel, *Allah in the West. Islamist Movements in America and Europe*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); Frank J. Buijs, *Democratie en terreur*, (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SWP 2002), p. 90.

[91] Richard E. Rubenstein, *Alchemists of Revolution: Terrorism in the Modern World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987), p. 226.

[92] Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, 'The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalisation', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012), p. 17.

[93] Carl Bjorkman, 'Salafi-Jihadi Terrorism in Italy', in M. Ranstorp (Ed.) (2010), op. cit. p. 240.

generation migrant youths from diasporas that are not well integrated in a host country, it is difficult to identify specific vulnerable individuals and groups. Tinka Veldhuis and Jorgen Staun noted in this context:

> Researchers as well as policy makers are pressed to define segments of society that are most vulnerable to radicalisation. However […] it is difficult to point out societal groups as being more vulnerable to radicalisation than others. First, the proportion of Muslims who radicalise is too small to be categorized into social – vulnerable – groups. Statistically, Islamist terrorists in the West have been young, male, and relatively well educated (e.g. Bakker, 2006). This does not mean that young, male, well-educated Muslims are more vulnerable to radicalisation, let alone that policy makers should target this group on which to focus counter-radicalisation policy. […] We argue that it is crucial for policy makers to move away from the question of which groups are likely to radicalise, but instead ask under what conditions individuals become more likely to radicalise.[94]

4. What is the role of the Internet in radicalisation?

Terrorism involves a combination of violence and communication. While the violence itself has increased somewhat since the invention of the 'propaganda by the deed' in the second half of the nineteenth century, the communication linked to violence has skyrocketed with the advent of mass print media, radio, television and ultimately the internet. There is no doubt that the Internet with its low cost, ease of access, speed, anonymity, de-centralisation, size, global connectivity and weak or lacking regulation has played an important role in the dissemination of radical messages, the creation of a virtual ideological community, the raising of funds, the communication between members of terrorist organisations, the radicalisation of vulnerable individuals and, to some extent, also the recruitment of new members.[95]

While there are a few cases of 'lone wolfs' where the Internet appears to have been the sole instrument of radicalisation,[158] in most cases it appears to be 'secondary face-to-face interaction in real settings' that was decisive, as a report of the Change Institute put it.[159] However, the Internet creates some sort of imaginary radical milieu among some of its users and the Ummah (the global Islamic community), which is constantly referred to by jihadist propaganda and has for some gained a degree of reality even beyond the virtual world of the Internet.[160]

The question is not whether the Internet has influence. We know for sure that is has a big and diverse influence on many of its users.[161] However, we do not yet know how such an influence can be countered without reducing the right to freedom of expression and establishing some form of censorship.[162] The sheer volume of traffic on the Internet in so many languages and at various levels of sophisticated encryption has made the task of countering terrorist propaganda Herculean.[163]

Terrorism is, as noted earlier, a combination of violence and propaganda and its communicative aspects, while well-known, have not been adequately dealt with by Western democracies, despite laudable initiatives by individual countries.[164]

Technical solutions to online incitement and glorification of terrorist violence are difficult but not impossible to implement;[165] however, these might be insufficient and sometimes counterproductive.[166] As a report on *Countering Online Radicalisation* put it:

> Most governments have focused on technical solutions, believing that removing or blocking radicalising material on the Internet will solve the problem. Yet this report shows that any strategy that relies on reducing the availability of content alone is bound to be crude, expensive and counterproductive. Radicalisation is largely a real-world phenomenon that cannot be dealt with

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[94] T. Veldhuis and J. Staun (2009), op. cit. pp. 64-6.

[95] United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, *First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism* (New York: UN/CTITF, September 2008), p. 14. [http://www.un.org/terrorism/ pdfs/radicalisation.pdf]; Akil N. Awan, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin, *Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and terrorism in the new media ecolo*gy (London: Routledge, 2012).

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The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), *Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action* (London: ICSR, 2009), p. 13. However, we should not forget the positive effects of the Internet, e.g. in the form of providing forums for public debate where all those with open minds can learn from each other and share a wealth of information that might also be used to counter radicalisation to terrorism. This aspect is beyond the purview of this paper.

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In one of its reports, the Change Institute concluded: 'While there are claims that the Internet may contribute to radicalisation, including self-radicalisation, the report leads us to conclude that this is likely to be secondary to face-to-face interaction in real settings. The predominant role of the web for violent radicals is as a distribution mechanism, promoting violence against the enemy, propaganda in terms of military 'successes' and the glorification of martyrs'. Summary of report: 'The Beliefs, Ideologies and Narratives of Violent Radicalisation', Report for the European Commission, The Change Institute, *Security and Counter-Terrorism: Studies in Violent Radicalisation* (January 2009), p. 4. See: www.changeinstitute.co.uk. 160

Maura Conway, 'Von al-Zarqawi bis al-Awlaki. Das Internet als eine neue Form des radikalen Milieus', in Stefan Malthaner und Peter Waldmannn (Eds.), *Radikale Milieus* (Frankfurt A.M.: Campus Verlag, 2012), pp. 279-306.

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Terrorist supporters posted an article under the title 'Cyber Jihad on the website of the Global Jihad'. It claims: "The implementation of the Global Jihad leans on two pillars: the suicide attackers or bombers on the operational side and the Internet or cyber space on the management aspect. The three components Command, Control and Communication, necessary for any successful operation, including terror attacks, are carried out almost inclusively through the Internet. The cyber space is also the main Islamic militancy tool for propaganda, distributing ideas, recruiting volunteers and raising money[…]" http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=399; accessed 22 December 2012. Some of these claims are echoed by counter-terrorist agencies. See Nationaal Coordinator Terrorismebestrijding (NCTb), *Jihadisten en het Internet* (The Hague: NCTb, April 2010). This study concluded that 'Propaganda via the Internet contributes to radicalisation' and use of the Internet supports the entire process of radicalisation, as well as 'Formation of virtual networks enhances the power of the jihadist movement'. Further it found that 'recruitment via the Internet occurs primarily in an interactive way' and that Applications for information-gathering via the Internet are potentially supportive in the conduct of terrorist activities'; 'Fund-raising via the Internet takes place on a limited scale'; 'Training via the Internet lowers thresholds, but the danger of physical training is larger', 'Jihadists use the Internet for communication among themselves and planning' and 'The Internet is for the jihadist movement above all a crucial instrument for interactive communication and for the preparation of terrorist activities' (*Ibid.*, pp. 10-2).

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In Europe, there is an effort under way to explore ways of reducing terrorist abuse of the Internet. See Clean IT draft document: *Reducing terrorist use of the Internet* (Utrecht: 4th Clean IT workshop, September 2012). The final report was issued on 20 January 2013.

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AIVD (Dutch Intelligence and Security Service), *Jihadism on the Web – a breeding ground for Jihad in the modern age* (The Hague: AIVD, 2012). 164

Ibid., pp. 14-5. See also Brigitte L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). Nacos argues that 'publicity – far more than financial resources – is as essential for terrorists as the air they breathe. Terrorists perform their violent street theatre not, or not only, to harm their immediate victims but to obtain the attention of mass publics that they could not reach without the media communicating their deeds and carrying their messages' (*Ibid.*, p. 193). 165

Cyrus Farivar, Europe's quixotic plan to 'clean' the Internet of terrorists. Available online at www.arstechnica.com, 9 August 2012.

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Clean IT Project Group, *Reducing terrorist use of the Internet* (The Hague: Ministry of Security and Justice, 30 January 2013), (Publication No. J-16813; available at www.rijksoverheid.nl/venj). For some caveats, see also Bibi van Ginkel, *Incitement to Terrorism: A Matter of Prevention or Repression?* (The Hague: ICCT Research Paper, August 2011).

> simply by "pulling the plug". […] Any strategy that hopes to counter online radicalisation must aim to create an environment in which the production and consumption of such materials become not just more difficult in a technical sense but unacceptable as well as less desirable. Elements of this strategy include: deterring the producers of extremist materials; empowering online communities to self-regulate; reduce the appeal of extremist messages [and] promote positive messages.[167]

5. Is Islamist radicalisation different from other, more secular forms of radicalisation?

The answer to this question depends heavily on how one wishes to define Islamist radicalisation. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, for instance, defined radical Islamist extremism in a way that includes:

> [T]he ideologies of takfiri jihadist groups like al-Qaeda, nationalist Islamist terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, and the so-called conveyor belt groups like Hizb al-Tahrir (HT). While groups like HT do not perpetrate acts of terrorism per se, they help to lay the groundwork for alQaeda's toxic message to take hold and for individuals to take action. We do not consider antiUnited States or anti-West attitudes alone to constitute radicalism. The task force also distinguished between radicalisation and religious piety/devotion to Islam. The extremist ideology at issue is a distortion of Islam, and in fact, many who have been radicalised remain surprisingly ignorant about the religion, particularly as the radicalisation process has accelerated in recent years.[168]

Regarding this question, a recent RAND study noted that 'one of the most glaring gaps in the literature is the failure to examine the similarities and differences between Islamist militants and other types of extremists and then to determine the implications of these findings for the processes of disengagement and de-radicalisation.'[169]

Many studies simply assume that there are no relevant differences, while others assert that Islamist extremists are uniquely dangerous and irreconcilable. [170] Although it is evident that religious doctrine distinguishes militant Islamists from secular militants, the effects have not been fully explored. It can be argued that because they are motivated by faith, Islamist extremists are more committed than nonreligious extremists and are therefore less likely to de-radicalise.[171]

It has been repeatedly observed that in Europe, some young migrants (and children of migrants) who join a Salafist jihadist group, know little of Islam, that their knowledge is 'a la carte' – an eclectic mix of out of context Koran and Hadith quotes gained from websites rather than acquired from a study of more trustworthy sources. However, that is not always true. Some Salafists and converts to Islamism do go to the original sources and study them in depth.

It might well be that radicalisation, where rewards for participation in group violence is apparently sanctioned by religion, is in some ways different from radicalisation of members of secular ethno-nationalist

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[167]
International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), *Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action* (London: ICSR, 2009), p. 1. [168]

Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Presidential Task Force on Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism, *Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counterterrorism* (Washington, DC. Washington Institute, March 2009), p. 1n. *Takfir* is a pronouncement that someone is an unbeliever (*kafir*) with the implication that since he is no longer a Muslim he can be killed. Most Muslims consider it a doctrinal deviation but salafist jihadists inspired by Qutb and Mawdudi adhere to this notion. John L. Esposito, T*he Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), p. 312. [169]

Angel Rabasa, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez and Christopher Boucek, *Deradicalising Islamist Extremists* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010). [170]

For a discussion, see Mark Juergensmeyer, 'Religion as a Cause of Terrorism', in Louise Richardson (Ed.), *The Roots of Terrorism*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 133-44. Juergensmeyer concludes: 'The grievances – the sense of alienation, marginalization, and social frustration – are often articulated in religious terms and seen through religious images, and the protest against them is organised by religious leaders through the medium of religious institutions. Thus religion is not the initial problem, but the fact that religion is the medium through which these issues are expressed is problematic. [...] Religion brings more to conflict than a repository of symbols and the aura of divine support, it problematizes a conflict through its abiding absolutism, its justification for violence, and its ultimate images of warfare that demonize opponents and cast the conflict in transhistoric terms' (Ibid., pp. 141-143).
[171]
Angela Rabasa, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez and Christopher Boucek, *De-radicalising Islamist Extremists* (St. Monica: RAND, 2010), pp. 26-7.

groups (although exalted 'nationalism' at times takes the form of a quasi-religion). The European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation concluded in 2008 that religious and political radicalisation should not be confounded.[96] However, the last word on this issue has not been spoken.

What is undeniable is that there has been a strong rise in religiously-motivated or religiously-justified terrorism whereby the role of political Islamism has been prominent. In the strongly quantitative exploration *Are Muslims Distinctive? A Look at the Evidence*, Steven Fish concluded that:

> [...] the bulk of terrorist acts over the past fifteen years have been committed by Islamists in the name of religion. The vast majority of incidents of Islamist terrorism have occurred outside the West, where fear of Islamist terrorism is strong. This fact raises the possibility that people in the West may sometimes exaggerate the danger of Islamist terrorism in their own lands. Still, Islamists are responsible for most of the terrorist incidents that occur in the world and most of the deaths suffered in acts of terrorism. Most Muslims may oppose terrorism and regard it as incompatible

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[96] The Concise Report of the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation on Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism is reprinted in Rik Coolsaet (Ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences*, 2nd edition (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 269 -87.

with their religion, but most terrorists are Islamists. […] Terrorism is, in fact, disproportionally a Muslim problem, at least at the present moment.[97]

While this empirical finding does not answer the question whether Islamist radicalisation is different from other, more secular forms of radicalisation, it points to the need to explore this question further.

6. Are certain types of counter-terrorism and repression causing (further) radicalisation?

There is a growing body of literature that claims that over-reaction to terrorism causes more terrorism.[98] Since there are so few rigorous evaluation studies, it is difficult to verify this. However, it does seem that many acts of terrorism are motivated by revenge for acts of repression, injustice and humiliation and that a tit-for-tat process can evolve after a while. A difficult problem here is: what is an appropriate reaction and what is an over-reaction by governments? It is well known that repressive over-reaction sometimes has worked, for example in Argentina. The price paid in innocent lives for such response, however, was horrendous in Argentina in the late 1970s and also Guatemala in the 1980s, where it reached catastrophic near-genocidal proportions. There were cases such as in Peru in the fight against Shining Path or in Algeria in the 1990s in the fight against the Groupe Islamique Armé, where the governmental 'cure' to terrorism was as bad as, if not worse than, the 'disease' of terrorism itself. In general, a proportionate response based on a minimal use of force appears to be wiser. The deterrent effect of overwhelming force is often over-estimated. Deterrence is unlikely to work in cases where terrorists have no known address, are not afraid of becoming martyrs and when there is no clear state-sponsor behind the terrorists to hit back to.[175]

The democratic, rule of law-based state has to find a balance between freedom and security. In which direction the balance is weighing depends on the level of the terrorist threat, something that is not always easy to assess. However, in the end, there cannot be freedom without security; and people are, if it comes to a hard choice, generally opting for 'security first' over liberty. If the state overreacts to terrorist provocations and becomes very repressive and aggressive, it often produces additional mobilisation on the other side despite the fact that the escalation potential on the government side is so much greater than the one of terrorist groups. It is by now widely accepted that the US and United Kingdom's (UK) invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent horror pictures from the Abu Ghraib prison documented by the American guards themselves, have contributed greatly to both radicalisation and recruitment for al-Qaeda. Some critics even claim that the state's (over-) reaction to terrorism is in itself a major cause of terrorism.[176] However, we need more rigorous evaluation studies to make definitive assessments.

7. Is radicalisation taking place on both sides: among the defenders as well as the attackers?

Finally, we tend to assume that radicalisation is something that occurs only on the other side, not noting that in responding to terrorism, the polarisation process in society – and between societies – often radicalises both sides. As referred to earlier, McCauley and Moskalenko have pointed out that 'radicalisation happens to Them and Us':[177]

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[97] M. Steven Fish, op. cit. (2011), pp. 258-59.

[98] See, for instance, Andrew Silke, 'Fire of Iolaus: the role of state counter measures in causing terrorism and what needs to be done', in Tore Bjørgo (Ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, reality and ways forward* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 241-55; Tom Parker, 'Fighting an Antaean Enemy: How Democratic States Unintentionally Sustain the Terrorist Movements They Oppose', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 19 (2007), pp. 155-79. See also, Joshua Alexander Geltzer, *US Counter-Terrorism Strategy and al-Qaeda. Signalling and the terrorist world-view* (London: Routledge, 2012). The latter author concluded that '....the Bush administration's approach to counterterrorist signalling proved in some aspects wasted and in many respects actually counter-productive, as it served to vindicate rather than undermine al-Qaeda's campaign and strategy', (Ibid., pp. 136-37). [175]
    For a more optimistic view about the utility of deterrence in cases of terrorism, see Andreas Wenger & Alex Wilner (Eds.), *Deterring Terrorism: Theory and Practice*, (Stanford, University Press, 2012).

Political radicalisation of individuals, groups and mass publics occurs in a trajectory of action and reaction, and the end of the trajectory can seldom be controlled by either side alone. Radicalisation emerges in a relationship, in the friction of intergroup competition and conflict that heats both sides. It is this relationship that must be understood if radicalisation is to be kept short of terrorism. Focusing on them is not enough. Focusing on us is not enough. Focusing on the dynamics of conflict over time is essential.[178]

Some of the developments in US government policies under the Bush-Cheney administration after 9/11 can be interpreted in terms of radicalisation. The use of torture techniques like 'waterboarding', and kidnapping of foreigners abroad so-called 'renditions') have been radical departures from democratic rule of law procedures and international human rights standards. McCauley and Moskalenko's book *Friction* is a salutary reminder that in responding to terrorism we might, if we do not watch out, unwittingly radicalise ourselves and become more like the radicalised opponents.

One of the biggest shortcomings of the literature on (counter-)terrorism is that so many studies have been blind to what the other side – the government – did and does at home and abroad.[179] To illustrate this with an analogy from sport: If a reporter described a tennis match only in terms of what happens on one side of the net, we would rightfully complain that we got only half the story. When it comes to terrorism, such a one-sided discourse is, however, still widely accepted. Too many analysts have sought the causes of radicalisation only on the side of non-state actors. It might well be that many, perhaps even the majority of 'root causes' of radicalisation are indeed on one side of the net, but the almost systematic disregard for government counterterrorist behaviour is nevertheless striking. Government actions and counter-terrorism policies (e.g. targeted assassinations, drone attacks, torture), can exacerbate a critical situation, causing radicalisation on the other side of the conflict or reinforcing existing radicalisation even further. There are a number of studies that focus on what has been termed 'blowback'[180] but they have hardly influenced mainstream thinking on counter-terrorism. As US Congressman Dennis Kucinich recently pointed out:

> After more than 10 years of war against al-Qaeda and the accompanying global 'war on terrorism', we have failed to learn that our actions create reactions. Our presence creates destabilisation,

[176]
See Andrew Silke op. cit. (note 174), (2011), pp. 345-57; Tom Parker, 'Why Right is Might: How Social Science on Radicalisation suggests that International Human Rights Norms actually help Effective Counterterrorism Policies', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (August 2012), pp. 4-22. [177]
Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), p. 223.
[178]
Ibid., p. 223. Following a suggestion by Michael Schwerin, they also suggest that 'It is possible that the mechanisms of political radicalisation identified here may be general mechanisms of collective action, operating not just in mobilising for political conflict but for any kind of collective mobilisation in which self-interest is lost in or joined with some larger group or cause'. McCauley and Moskalenko (2011), op. cit. (note 177), p. 216. [179]
There is also too little awareness about what civil society can do to counter terrorism and build up resilience. Among the exceptions is the volume by Brian M. Jenkins, *Unconquerable Nation: Knowing Our Enemy, Strengthening ourselves* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2006); see also the inaugural lecture of Edwin Bakker, *Naar meer weerbaarbeid en veerkracht in contraterrorismebeleid* (Leiden: University Press, 2012). [180]
Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2000). According to the author, blowback 'refers to the unintended consequences of policies that were kept secret from the American people. What the daily press reports as the malign acts of 'terrorists' or 'drug lords' or 'rogue states' or, 'illegal arms merchants' often turn out to be blowback from earlier American operations.' (Ibid., p. 8).

> then radicalisation. Occupation creates insurgencies. In Afghanistan we have fuelled the very insurgency we struggle to fight. Al-Qaeda had relatively little presence in Iraq prior to the U.S. invasion. The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the subsequent destruction and violence, enabled Al-Qaeda to flourish. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates are now conducting an accelerated campaign of relentless attacks and suicide bombings in Iraq. Last year's intervention in Libya is another example. The U.S. and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies spurred a civil war, taking

sides despite persistent questions about the nature of the opposition. The war and the chaos that followed have allowed radical groups to gain another foothold.[99]

Awareness that the problem of radicalisation is not just a micro-level problem of vulnerable young people being misled by terrorist recruiters exists also in the intelligence community. One of the meeting points between intelligence officials and academics is the Global Futures Forum. In one of its meetings, held in The Hague in 2007, this group of experts identified the following key drivers of radicalisation for the coming years:

- Mass communication and propaganda;
- Western responses to radicalisation;
- Governance in target countries;
- Western dominance (both real and perceived);
- State-to-state tensions;
- Religion (and its relationship to politics);
- Government responsiveness (civil society);
- Immigration and demographics;
- Us vs. them identity politics;
- New ideologies;
- Resources (scarcities, conflicts over-);
- Violence (associated with extremism).[100]

Where Do We Stand in our Understanding of 'Radicalisation'? Some Tentative Conclusions

Many findings on terrorism and radicalisation and – as we shall see below – also on de-radicalisation are, at this stage, tentative and often only locally applicable or within narrow, regional contexts. There are, however, a number of propositions – referring to drivers, triggers and pull and push factors – which have been found plausible in some contexts as explanations why individuals or entire groups radicalise.

The samples of radicals and terrorists studied by individual researchers and teams to determine the causes and trajectories of radicalisation in Western diasporas have usually been small and we do not know how representative they are. As has been noted earlier, no control group of young people in similar situations that have not radicalised or, when radicalised, did not opt for terrorism, have been used in the radicalisation studies surveyed here.[101] The findings of many radicalisation studies have also been rather diverse, not pointing all in one direction, which would identify principle root causes and facilitate the development of effective, generally applicable de-radicalisation programmes. This is not so much a reflection on the quality of researchers and projects but reflects mainly the difficulties of studying underground organisations and clandestine operators, the availability of raw data and control groups, and the political nature of the subject.

Some authors even question whether 'radicalisation' is the right framework to understand what drove home-grown individuals and small groups to their attempts to engage in individual or collective action in the form

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[99] Rep. Dennis Kucinich, 'Tilling the Ground for the Seeds of Terrorism', Op ed. *The Huffington Post* (22 August 2012). Available online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-dennis-kucinich/tilling-the-ground-for-th_b_1821303.html.

[100] Global Futures Forum, *Radical Worlds of 2020: Imagining the Futures of Radicalisation* (The Hague, 12-14 December 2007), p. 54.

[101] An exception of sorts is the study by J. Bartlett & C. Miller, 'The edge of violence: Towards telling the difference between violent and non-violent radicalisation', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012), pp. 1-21. It was based on two years of fieldwork in the UK, Canada, Denmark, France and the Netherlands and looked at both violent and non-violent home-grown radicals. However, there was no control group of people who remained apathetic in face of the same provocative challenges.

of perpetrating acts of terrorism. One of them is John Mueller, who looked at 50 American Islamist plots since 9/11 and concluded:

> It is common in the literature and in the case studies that follow to assess the process by which potential terrorists become 'radicalised'. But now examining the cases as a group, it is not at all clear to me that this is a good way to look at the phenomenon. The concept tends to imply that there is an ideological motivation to the violence, but what chiefly sets these guys off is not anything particularly theoretical but rather intense outrage at American and Israeli actions in the Middle East and a burning desire to seek revenge, to get back, to defend, and/or to make a violent statement expressing their hostility to what they see as a war on Islam.[102]

Others also have doubted the uses and usefulness of the concept of radicalisation. Rik Coolsaet recently asked, under the heading 'Whither Radicalisation?' in a book chapter on *Terrorism and Radicalisation: What Do We Now Know?*:

> Notwithstanding the numerous endeavours in academia, police and policy circles, no metrics exist to gauge radicalisation. Most analysts of the growth of the scale of radicalisation miss conceptual clarity and scientific fundamentals and therefore lack empirical validation. They are often based upon assumption and generalizations and should be handled with a healthy dose of common sense […] radicalisation and de-radicalisation have become catchall concepts. […] The concept of radicalisation emphasizes the individual as the focus of analysis and, to some extent, the ideology of the group, and significantly de-emphasises the wider circumstances that might help explain why radicalisation becomes significant at a given moment in time and might lead to terrorist actions.[103]

John Horgan even confessed in a discussion at a START conference on 1 September 2011: 'We should not have allowed to have radicalisation centre stage. […] We are stuck with radicalisation.'[104]

Nevertheless we cannot do away with the concept of radicalisation. The concept remains useful and indeed indispensable, if we:

1. See it as a process that can affect conflict parties on both sides in a confrontation;
2. Remain aware of the fact that radical opinions do not necessarily lead to political violence or terrorism;
3. Detach radicalisation to some extent from radicalism and link it more to the process of growing commitment to and engagement with (violent) extremism;
4. Apply it not only to individuals and small groups but also to larger collectivities;
5. Analyse radicalisation not only on the micro- but also on the meso- and macro-levels.

However, as pointed out earlier: any weakness in our conceptualisation and understanding of 'radicalisation' is also likely to affect our understanding of 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation'. The following will focus more narrowly on these concepts.

Focus on De-Radicalisation (& Disengagement)[187]

If radicalisation is a fuzzy concept, the same is by extension also true for de-radicalisation. Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan, who studied this issue longer than most others in the field of terrorism studies, noted in 2009 that 'having worked on these issues for a number of years, we find the lack of conceptual clarity in the emerging discourse on

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[102] John Mueller (Ed.), *Terrorism since 9/11. The American Cases* (Columbus, Ohio: Mershon Center, June 2012). Available online at http://politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller//ISA12ter.pdf
[103] Rik Coolsaet, 'Terrorism and Radicalisation: What Do We Now Know?', in Rik Coolsaet (2011), op. cit., pp. 260-62.
[104] J. Horgan, presentation at START conference, University of Maryland (1 September 2011). Video- recorded by START.

de-radicalisation striking. De-radicalisation often appears to be understood as any effort aimed at preventing radicalisation from taking place'.[188]

Others see de-radicalisation less in terms of prevention and more in terms of the de-programming of those already radicalised. In the words of Froukje Demant and her colleagues:

> [I]t is the process of becoming less radical. This process of 'becoming less radical' applies both to behaviour and beliefs. With regard to behaviour, this primarily involves the cessation of violent actions. With regard to beliefs, this involves an increase in confidence in the system, a desire to once more be a part of society, and the rejection of non-democratic means. […] In general, the de-radicalisation of behaviour is linked with the de-radicalisation of beliefs.[189]

Yet when we look at what is subsumed in much of the literature under 'de-radicalisation', Demant, *et al.*'s statement that '[d]e-radicalisation is the opposite of radicalisation'[190] seems not to apply universally. Moghadam agrees and finds that 'the path to de-radicalisation is not necessarily the reverse of the path to radicalisation'.[191] This is also reflected in the wide variety of measures and objectives advocated for de-radicalisation of individuals and groups, such as:

- Amnesty;
- Counselling;
- Deprogramming;
- Dialogue;
- Demobilisation;
- Disbandment;
- Disengagement;
- Reconciliation;
- Reintegration.[192]

The UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that lead to Terrorism adopted a definition of de-radicalisation proposed by John Horgan, describing it

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[187] De-radicalisation is sometimes also used to cover disengagement. Strictly speaking, these are two different processes. The first is a cognitive process while the second is a behavioural outcome. However, physical disengagement from a terrorist group can take place without ideological de-radicalisation. See John Horgan, 'De-radicalisation or Disengagement?', *Perspectives on Terrorism,* Vol. 2, No. 4, (2008). [188]

T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan, 'Conclusions', in Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan (Eds.), L*eaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 3. In 2012, Horgan noted that 'Though de-radicalisation programs became an attractive and catchy short-cut label to describe these creative, unique, and varied initiatives, in reality many of the programs are not overly concerned about de-radicalisation as it is popularly imagined. Broadly speaking, de-radicalisation includes any effort to change or re-direct views that are supportive of – and thereby, the assumption goes, *conducive to* – violent action. Notably, the term, 'de-radicalisation' is scarcely found in any formal description of these initiatives.' John Horgan and Mary Beth Altier, 'The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalization Programs', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (Summer/Fall 2012), p. 86. [189]

Froukje Demant, Marieke Slootman, Frank Buijs, Jean Tillie, *Decline and Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of De-radicalisation* (Amsterdam: Institute for Migration & Ethnic Studies [IMES], 2008), p. 13. [190] Ibid. [191]

Fathali M. Moghadam, 'De-radicalisation and the Staircase from Terrorism', in David Canter (Ed.), *The Faces of Terrorism: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), p. 281. [192]

John Horgan and Max Taylor, 'Disengagement, De-radicalisation and the Arc of Terrorism: Future Directions for Research', in Rik Coolsaet (Ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences,* 2nd edition (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 175.

as 'programmes that are generally directed against individuals who have become radical with the aim of reintegrating them into society or at least dissuading them from violence.'[105]

A look at some national efforts to 'de-radicalise' violent militants can be helpful in improving our understanding.

National De-Radicalisation Programmes

In the world's prisons and detention centres there are tens of thousands of suspected and convicted terrorists, most of them in the Middle East and Asia.[194] Almost three dozen states have introduced, under various labels, deradicalisation programmes. De-radicalisation efforts are of two types: (i) individual ideological de-radicalisation, using psychological and religious counselling to produce a change of mind, and (ii) collective de-radicalisation, using political negotiations to obtain a type of change of behaviour (e.g. cease fire, de-commissioning of arms). An example for the first approach would be the efforts undertaken by the government of Singapore while the second approach has been utilised in Egypt. There are also combinations of the two models, such as in the Indonesian approach.[106] Studies on de-radicalisation programmes exist for both the Western world and for Muslim majority countries.[107][108][96]

When looking at some of the existing programmes, a UN/CTITF report[197] identified nine types of national programmes, based on responses from 34 countries engaging and working with civil society:

- Prison programmes;
- Education;
- Promoting alliance of civilisations and inter-cultural dialogue;
- Tackling economic and social inequalities;
- Global programmes to counter radicalisation;
- The Internet;
- Legislation reforms;
- Developing and disseminating information;
- Training and qualifying agencies involved in implementing counter-radicalisation policies.

National de-radicalisation programmes have often multiple purposes. Their objectives have been

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[105] Institute for Strategic Dialogue, *Tackling Extremism: De-Radicalisation and Disengagement* (Copenhagen: Conference Report, 8-9 May 2012), pp. 1-2. [194]

Arie Kruglanski, Michele Gelfand, and Rohan Gunaratna, 'Detainee De-radicalisation: A Challenge for Psychological Science', *Association for Psychological Science Observer*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 2010), p. 1. Available online at http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=2607.

[106] Arab Thought Forum, *Countering violent extremism: Learning from de-radicalisation programs in some Muslim-majority countries* (Amman, Jordan, 15-17 March 2012). Notes of a conference participant, obtained by author. One of the assumptions underlying deradicalisation programs in Muslim countries is that the radicalised young men are seen as having a wrong interpretation of Islam and therefore giving them the 'correct' interpretation of the Koran and the Hadiths is the solution. For the Indonesian model, see Magnus Ranstorp, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation and Terrorism: The Case of Indonesia* (Stockholm: Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies, 2009). The Indonesian model involves, *inter alia*: (i) mobilisation of religious leaders (ulama) who can address radical backlash; (ii) religious scholars and teachers who can garner the requisite intellectual and theological support for a pluralistic and tolerant interpretation of Islam; (iii) involvement of pop idols who have massive support from young people; (iv) government leaders who are able to address social factors as an underlying source of extremism, and (v) business leadership that offers financial support. LibForAll Foundation (Indonesia) leaflet, p. [107].

[108] See, for instance, Hamed El-Said and Jane Harrigan, *De-radicalizing Violent Extremists: Counter-Radicalisation and De-radicalisation Programs and their Impact in Muslim Majority States* (London, New York: Routledge: 2012); Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalisation of Jihadists: Transforming armed Islamist movements* (London: Routledge, 2009); Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk, *Engaging with Violent Islamic Extremism* (The Hague: Eleven International Publishing, 2012). [197]

United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, *First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism: Inventory of State Programmes* (New York: UN/CTITF, September 2008), p. 5.

summarised by Bjørgo and Horgan in 2009:

- Reducing the number of active terrorists;
- Reducing violence and victimisation;
- Re-orientating ideological views and attitudes of the participants;
- Re-socialise ex-members back to normal life;
- Acquiring intelligence, evidence and witnesses in court cases;
- Using repentant ex-terrorists as opinion builders;
- Sowing dissent within the terrorist milieu;
- Providing an exit from terrorism and 'underground' life;
- Reducing the dependency on repressive means and make more use of more humane means in counterterrorism;
- Reducing the economic and social costs of keeping a large number of terrorists in prison for a long time;
- Increasing the legitimacy of the government or state agency.[109]

How effective have such programmes been? In May 2011, the International Peace Institute (IPI) in New York published a report based on de-radicalisation initiatives in eight Muslim-majority countries. The IPI report tried to draw some 'preliminary lessons' and highlight 'good practices', which, according to the authors Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Hamed El-Said, 'corroborate the experiences of countries in other regions that have grappled with violent extremist groups'.[110] However, closer scrutiny of their report offers little detail in addition to general observations like:

- Family matters;
- Addressing the social network is key;
- Programmes should address individual motivations;
- Credibility of the interlocutors is vital;
- Prisoner treatment plays a crucial role;
- Post-programme monitoring or care;
- The importance of civil society involvement;
- Reactive measures should be situated within more proactive approaches;
- The value of education.

In the end, the 2011 IPI report had to concede that '[r]esearch on de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes is still in its infancy'.[111]

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[109] John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 'Evaluating the Effectiveness of De-Radicalisation Programs: Towards a Scientific Approach to Terrorism Risk Reduction', in Sarah Canna (Ed.), (2011) op. cit., pp. 1-2.

[110] Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Hamed El-Said, *Transforming Terrorists: Examining International Efforts to Address Violent Extremism* (New York: International Peace Institute, 2011), p. 1. The countries studied were: Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Yemen.

[111] Ibid, p. 28. Fink reported the same in a 2008 study with Ellie B. Hearne, noting 'common patterns which arose among the factors encouraging disengagement from violent extremism. Among these were familial and social influences; frustration with the group's leadership or tactics; and longing for a 'normal' civilian life separate from clandestine activities and the threat of punitive actions by law enforcement. Consequently, whether discussing white supremacist groups or jihadist terrorists, disengagement and de-radicalisation were encouraged by many similar factors, beginning for many with the experience of trauma and a subsequent 'cognitive opening,' disillusionment, revulsion, or stress, and further facilitated by education, social and economic assistance, and counselling.' Naureen Chowdhury Fink with Ellie B. Hearne (Rapporteurs), *Beyond Terrorism: De-radicalisation and Disengagement from Violent Extremism* (New York: International Peace Institute, October 2008), p. i.

Let us have a closer look at one of these rehabilitation programmes – the one from Saudi Arabia which claimed at one time a very high success rate.[112] The Saudi programme was developed under Mohammed Nayef, a close relative of the late Crown Prince Nayef, and focused on de-radicalising and rehabilitating captured and surrendered Jihadists.[202] The programme, which lasts 8 to 12 weeks, has since 2003 processed over 4,000 radical detainees, releasing about half of them back to society. It is an expensive programme, including, psychological counselling, religious re-education, vocational training, sports and arts therapy. It also includes helping the 'rehabilitated' terrorists to find jobs and even wives. The post-release programme involves intense surveillance of the former radicals and holding family members responsible for the post-release activities of the former terrorist.[203]

Of those who went through this programme, only 10-20 percent had, according to initial Saudi claims, been rearrested for recidivism – a fantastic success rate compared to recidivism from ordinary crime (which is around 40 percent in the best of countries and closer to 70 percent in many other countries).[113] Some of these claimed Saudi gains might have been ephemeral. One of the reasons for the difficulty of assessing the success of de-radicalisation efforts is dissimulation. To get out of prison, many terrorists learn 'to talk the talk'.[114] In fact, an unknown but not unsubstantial number of the graduates of the Saudi de-radicalisation programme reportedly fled to Yemen and re-joined al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula cells.[206] At one point, the Saudi authorities admitted that 10-20 percent of those released may have returned to illicit activities.[115] According to Jeff Addicott, Director of the Centre for Terrorism Law in Texas, the true figure is more likely to be 30-40 percent.[208] Such claims about successful de-radicalisations are impossible to evaluate from the outside.[116] Part of this is due to the flexible definition of 'rehabilitation'. The Saudi de-radicalisation programme was, as Christopher Boucek found, a Saudi solution to a Saudi problem. It is not replicable outside the context of Islam and is also unaffordable for most other Muslim countries.[117]

Unverifiable and potentially exaggerated claims about the effect of de-radicalisation programmes are not confined to Saudi Arabia, but also come from Singapore and Indonesia. Yet, some programmes in Europe also give rise to doubts. In the UK, following a review, many so-called PREVENT efforts have been abandoned for lack of quality control, lack of direction or lack of results. There has been a controversy between those who are willing to fight terrorists with the help of quasi- or former-extremists (who supposedly have 'street credibility' among vulnerable youth) and those who prefer to walk on the safe side and engage more moderate go-betweens from the Muslim community.[118] Like in the case of religious 'born again' true believers of a cult who have a 'closed mind' incapable to absorb opposing information and engage in strength-of-arguments-based rational reasoning, it is difficult to de- and re-programme extremist fanatics who claim to have found the one and only 'true religion'. In the current situation of lack of orientation, some strange recipes for de-radicalisation have surfaced such as an UK-supported effort to turn former terrorists released from prison into cage-fighters.[119] Success in de-radicalisation efforts is notoriously hard to measure. Horgan found that:

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[112] According to Christopher Boucek; see John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 'Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalisation Programs', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 22 (2010), p. 278. [202] Shooting the sheiks, *The Economist*, Vol. 404, No. 8793 (July 14-20, 2012), p. 32. [203] Jessica Stern (2010), op. cit. (note 121), p. 6.

[113] Matt Korade, 'Saudis Getting 'Intriguing Results' With De-Radicalisation Program', C*Q Homeland Security 'in the News'*, (2 Oct. 2008). Available online at http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/old/news/cq100208, accessed 21 March 2010, p. 1.

[114] Ibid*.*, p. 2. [206]
  Marisa L. Porges, *The Saudi De-radicalisation Experiment*, 'US Council on Foreign Relations', Expert Brief (22 January 2010). Available online at http://www.cfr.org/publication/21292/saudi_de-radicalisation__experiment.html; John Horgan and Mary Beth Altier, The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalisation Program*, Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (Summer/Fall 2012), p. 85.

[115] Marisa L. Porges (2010), op. cit. (note 206), pp. 1-2. [208]
  Diane Macedo, 'More Guantanamo Detainees Are Returning to Terror Upon Release', (Fox News, 29 March 2010). Available online at http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/03/29/gitmo-detainees-return-terror/.

[116] For one attempt, see Froukje Demant, Marieke Slootman, Frank Buijs, Jean Tillie, *Decline and Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of De-radicalisation* (Amsterdam: Institute for Migration & Ethnic Studies [IMES], 2008), pp. 157-82.

[117] Christopher Boucek, 'Extremist re-education and rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia', in Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind. Individual and Collective Disengagement* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 212.

[118] Robert Lambert, 'Competing Counter-radicalisation Models', in Rik Coolsaet (Ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge,* second ed. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 215-26.

[119] 'Caging Terror', *CNN International,* 22 July 2012. [213]

With regard to existing initiatives […], there remains intense secrecy surrounding all but the most superficial details; despite, in some cases, highly publicized claims for success, there is no evidence of transparent or valid internal or external evaluation[213] of the claimed success of these programmes; furthermore, none of the programmes under examination displayed any clear criteria for establishing effective measurement of success or otherwise.[120]

Horgan's conclusion is echoed, to varying degrees, by other researchers who looked into the matter.[121] Like in the case of most anti- and counter-terrorist measures, funding for rigorous evaluation is scant or lacking altogether. Much of the evidence is based on individual de-radicalisation efforts in prison contexts, rather than radicalisation of whole groups.

We should also keep in mind that radicals might change their ways not due to push factors associated with incentives offered by de-radicalisation programmes but also as a result of more or less independent pull factors. On the individual level, reasons given for disengagement in another study, conducted by IPI, included these:

- Personal trauma, such as combat experience or the loss of a friend or colleague due to violent ideologies or hatreds;
- Disillusionment with the group's leadership;
- Stress of staying with the group/exhaustion of illicit lifestyle;
- Desire for a normal 'civilian' life, such as through marriage, finding a career, or beginning a family;
- Competing social relationships or pressure by family/friends – especially parents and partners/spouses who may use social relationships to highlight 'pull' factors.[216]

This is more or less in line with the recent findings by Richard Barrett and Laila Bokhari:

It may be a complete and final renunciation of violence, it may be a conditional renunciation, dependent on what happens next, or it may be a pragmatic and temporary renunciation based on the expectation of immediate benefit without any fundamental change of attitude. The actual political setting and factors such as proximity to conflict may play a role here in that the intensity of suppressive measures may encourage a terrorist to give up, either because he realizes the hopelessness of his cause or because he decides to live and fight another day. Alternatively, there may have been sufficient political reform for the terrorist to believe that the issues of disenfranchisement and marginalization for which he fought no longer apply; or that whatever other rationale existed for his grievance has disappeared.[217]

Various instruments to bring about de-radicalisation or, more often, disengagement (without de-radicalisation) have been identified in the literature. The tools that have been utilised include:

- The role of a go-between who can influence the terrorist (often from family or peer group);
- Ideological tools (such as counter-fatwas, dialogue with well-known imams and muftis);
- Repentant terrorists taking an active part in turning around former colleagues;
- Social measures (facilitating economic and social reintegration of the repentant terrorist);

The need for evaluation studies, on the other hand, is more and more acknowledged. See, for instance, Peter Romaniuk and Naureen Cjowdhury Fink, *From Input to Impact: Evaluating Terrorism Preventive Programs* (New York: Center for Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 2012).

[120] J. Horgan, at *START* conference of 1 September 2011, University of Maryland, College Park.

[121] For instance, A. Rabasa et. al. found that 'our knowledge of de-radicalisation programs remains limited and […] there are reasons to remain sceptical about the programs' claims of success.' Angel Rabasa, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez and Christopher Boucek, *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010), p. xvi; see also R. Barrett & L. Bokhari, 'De-radicalisation and rehabilitation

- Some form of continued/subsequent monitoring to avoid recidivism;
- Emphasis on family and peers, both as a support group and as a group towards which the repentant has responsibility, as a father, son, husband, friend, etc.[218]

Activities of individuals participating in de-radicalisation programmes cover a range of tasks. Based on a survey of five countries (Colombia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, UK, and Yemen), Bjørgo and Horgan found that these refer to:

- Disengagement from terrorism and related activities (direct operational activity);
- Disengagement from radical movements and associated politics (indirect activities, including subversion);
- Accepting and serving reduced sentences for crimes committed;
- Providing intelligence and/or serving as a witness in court, which may or may not result in delivering testimony that may see the subsequent imprisonment of former comrades;

programmes targeting religious terrorists and extremists in the Muslim world: An overview', in T. Bjorgo & J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 174. Amanda K. Johnston, *Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalisation Programs for Islamist Extremists*, (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, Dec. 2009). Abstract available online at www.stormingmedia.us/33/3344/A334415.html.
[216] Naureen Chowdhury Fink with Ellie B. Hearne (Rapporteurs), *Beyond Terrorism: De-radicalisation and Disengagement from Violent Extremism* (New York: International Peace Institute, October 2008), p. 3. [217] R. Barrett & L. Bokhari (2009), op. cit., pp. 171-2. [218] Ibid., pp. 171-4.

- Meeting victims as part of reconciliation and restorative justice initiatives;
- Distancing themselves publicly from terrorism and extremist activity as well as symbolic figures associated with these;
- Taking part in activities aimed at reducing recruitment and radicalisation to extremist groups as well as taking part in activities aimed at encouraging disengagement for those currently involved (e.g. counterradicalisation efforts).[219]

While some successes have been achieved in a number of cases by using such instruments, usually in combination, it nevertheless remains true what Bjørgo and Horgan noted in 2009 when, after reviewing existing de-radicalisation programmes, they admonished:

> [W]e need to be frank in admitting that we have limited data and knowledge to illuminate the processes at an individual and group level of disengagement. Furthermore, we lack the necessary data to test whether the various programmes are actually effective (and if so, why?) as most governments and organisations running such programmes are only releasing the data they consider convenient to make public.[220]

De-radicalisation as a social engineering technique emerged mainly in prisoner rehabilitation programmes. As such, the main focus has been on the militant rebel who broke some criminal laws. The strongest proof of the success of any de-radicalisation programme is a low rate of absence of recidivism to terrorist crimes after release. While recidivism by those who were imprisoned for terrorist crimes appears to be lower than among those who committed ordinary crimes, in fact we simply do not have enough quality data on the reengagement of former terrorists in violent activities to make an assessment of what works and what does not.[221] There is a considerable amount of more-or-less anecdotal evidence of individual success in de-radicalisation, but the reason for the success is somehow elusive. In the words of Arie Kruglanski:

> That genuine de-radicalisation can occur has been proven already in several programs. We ourselves have seen erstwhile terrorists now helping in the de-radicalisation efforts and even assisting in research work on de-radicalisation. Whether specific de-radicalisation programs are effective and what makes them so is a different question, but one in a dire need of an answer.[222]

It can be argued that a shift towards group disengagement might be more cost-effective and ought to be given greater priority given the fact that – from the point of view of society – changed behaviour matters more than changed beliefs.

Looking at group de-radicalisation and disengagement, there are some promising research-based findings. In a study of collective de-radicalisation of Islamist movements in Egypt, Algeria, Libya and Tajikistan, Ashour found that three exogenous variables accounted for the initiation of a de-radicalisation process at the group level:[223]

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John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 'Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalisation Programs', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 22 (2010), p. 281. 220

T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan, 'Conclusions', in Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind. Individual and Collective Disengagement* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 245-9. They elaborated further on this thought by saying: 'A desirable outcome of this project would be the provision of a simple formula for how to make terrorists disengage from violent activism; or at least to provide 'best practice' for how to develop and run a disengagement programme, applicable to any terrorist group in the world. Unfortunately, this is not possible [...]. The factors that drive or facilitate disengagement for each group tend to be context-specific, movement-specific and timespecific. Each programme is thus context-bound, and we ought to be cautious about over-generalizing from individual successes or failures'. 221

John Horgan and Max Taylor, 'Disengagement, De-radicalisation and the Arc of Terrorism: Future Directions for Research', in Rik Coolsaet (Ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences*, 2nd edition (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 174-8. 222

Arie W. Kruglanski, Michele Gelfand, and Rohan Gunaratna, 'Detainee De-radicalisation: A Challenge for Psychological Science', *Observer* (Association for Psychological Science), Vol. 23, Number 1 (January 2010), p. 3.
223
Clark McCauley, discussing Omar Ashour's book, *The De-radicalisation of Jihadis: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements* (2009); in Clark McCauley, 'Group Desistance from Terrorism: The Dynamics of Actors, Actions and Outcomes', in Rik Coolsaet (Ed.) (2011), op. cit. pp. 191-3.

- State repression (which makes terrorist leaders re-calculate the costs of continued violence);
- Selective inducements provided by the state as well as by other domestic and foreign actors which serve as 'carrots';
- Social interaction with others in a pluralistic political context.

Ashour found that successful initiation of de-radicalisation or discontinuation of terrorism involves behavioural changes (abandonment of violence) as well as ideological changes (de-legitimisation of the use of violence). These were, however, also found to be heavily dependent on three endogenous factors involving the radicals themselves: (i) strategic calculations, (ii) political learning and (iii) a revision of the group's world view.

Important for the initiation of a de-radicalisation process are, according to Ashour: (i) the dynamics between the spiritual and organisational leadership within a group; (ii) the group's interaction with society, and (iii) the domestic political circumstances of the country in which the group operates.[122] In a monograph published in 2011 on *The De-radicalisation of Jihadists*, Ashour came to the conclusion

[...] that four independent variables are necessary for the initiation and the success of a deradicalisation process within armed Islamist movements. These variables are charismatic leadership in control of its followers, state repression directed against the armed movement, selective inducements proffered by state and other actors, and social interaction between the layers of the movement as well as between the movement and the 'other'.[...] ....that was the case in Egypt and Algeria. The proposition can also explain the de-radicalisation processes of other armed Islamist movements elsewhere and possibly the de-radicalisation of armed, ideologically driven groups in general.[123]

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[122] O. Ashour, Lecture, 'De-Radicalisation in Egypt, Algeria, and Libya', (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 April, 2009).

[123] Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalisation of Jihadists: Transforming armed Islamist movements* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 137.

As mentioned above, one of the country programmes Ashour and Boucek's findings were based on was pre-Arab Spring Egypt. With regard to Egypt, Matt Eckel and Jeb Koogler, who also surveyed Egypt and some other Islamic countries, noted:

> Egypt has the largest 'de-radicalisation' program in the Arab world […] Very little has been written on Egypt's de-radicalisation program, despite its size and alleged successes. Much like other such programs, though, we do know that it involves bringing in moderate Muslim clerics to convince radicals of the fallacy of their views. Outside Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, and Indonesia have some of the largest de-radicalisation programs […] Getting back to Egypt, there are many more questions than answers. Like the Islamic word's other de-radicalisation programs, the verdict is out on their success.[124]

With regards to Egypt, an interesting question is whether the Tahrir revolution and the recent democratic elections have de-radicalised Salafi militants or, on the contrary, whether more people have been driven into their ranks, due to new opportunities for assembly and mobilisation and the dire job prospects for Egypt's youth in the wake of the Arab Spring. Egypt has held several elections since the revolution. It is an intriguing thought to consider fair and honest elections as a de-radicalisation instrument – but one that makes sense. Richard Rubenstein observed in 1987:

> [N]o solution to the problem of terrorism is conceivable that does not reconnect politicized young adults to society by involving them in mass-based movements for change. […] Whatever policies our rulers may favour, our policy must be to uproot the causes of terrorism by putting an end to the continued oppression of classes, nations, and ethnic communities, and by permitting young intellectuals to be reunited through collective action with their people.[125]

While it is possible to compare some general features of national and regional programmes, for example in Western European countries and cities,[126] it remains a fact that individual programmes tend to be very contextspecific in terms of both culture and locality. They cannot easily be transferred to other places or to other types of movements.[127]

Summary

Existing research indicates that there are many external, social factors that can push an individual towards radicalisation and there are also many internal factors that can pull him toward a terrorist group. However, just as there are many push and pull factors on the path of radicalisation, the same is true for de-radicalisation or, what happens much more often, disengagement from the terrorist group.[128] This discussion on de-radicalisation has been too cursory to offer conclusive findings. Rather than summarising the brief discussion above, I would like to offer

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[124] Matt Eckel and Jeb Koogler, 'De-radicalisation Programs: Changing Minds?', *Foreign Policy Watch* (17 Dec. 2007), available online at http://fpwatch.blogspot.com/2007/12/de-radicalisation-programs-changing.html, accessed 25 July 2012.

[125] Richard E. Rubenstein, *Alchemists of Revolution: Terrorism in the Modern World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987), p. 226, 234.

[126] As conducted by Froukje Demant, Marieke Slootman, Frank Buijs and Jean Tille, *Decline and Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of De-radicalisation* (Amsterdam: IMES, 2008), pp. 157 -182; Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk, *Engaging with Violent Islamic Extremism: Local Policies in Western European Cities* (The Hague: Eleven International Publishing, 2012).

[127] Magnus Ranstorp remarked with regard to efforts to export the Indonesian de-radicalisation model to Arab countries: 'Even though Indonesia has made enormous efforts to export its model to other countries as a means of bridging religious gaps, the country's efforts often encounter difficulty as a result of ethnic differences and cultural norms among Muslims in the Middle East. There are not only geographic barriers, strong cultural differences exist as well', M. Ranstorp, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation and Terrorism: The Case of Indonesia* (Stockholm: CATS, 2009), p. 20.

[128] Woodrow Wilson International Center, Event Summary, Lecture by John Horgan, 'Walking Away: Disengagement and De-Radicalisation from Terrorism', Notes taken by Robert Litwak (13 November 2009).

the conclusions of two studies that have focused in greater depth on these issues, one from Canada and the other from the UK.

Elaine Pressman from Public Safety Canada has summarised some of the factors thought to be relevant on the basis of an analysis of various de-radicalisation projects. In addition to the de-radicalisation and disengagement factors she came across (items 1 and 2 in the Table below), she also lists a third category on resilience which she calls 'protective factors' – factors that should make vulnerable young people more immune to the lure of terrorist groups.

De-radicalisation, Disengagement and Protection

1. **De-Radicalisation Factors**
   1.1 Rejection of rigid ideology
   1.2 Rejection of violence
   1.3 Evidence of replacement of non-violent goals
   1.4 Motivation to de-radicalise present

2. **Disengagement Factors**
   2.1 Belief that violence is a failing strategy
   2.2 Disillusionment with spiritual leadership
   2.3 Shift in ideology
   2.4 Disillusionment with organisation experiences
   2.5 Grown away from movement

3. **Protective Factors**
   3.1 Family/girlfriend/spouse influence relating to rejection of violence
   3.2 Community public opinion moved away from support for violence
   3.3 Change of vision of enemy and desired outcome
   3.4 Reversal of social alienation
   3.5 Non-violent views of significant others

Table 3: Factors Associated with De-radicalisation, Disengagement, and Protection[129]

A survey of existing de-radicalisation programmes, conducted by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, based on thirteen brief case studies, came to the following conclusions:

- Programmes are effective when they are voluntary – personal commitment is vital;
- Trust between the participant and programme staff is essential;
- It can be useful to involve former extremists in de-radicalisation and disengagement programmes because they have a deeper understanding of the challenges facing the individual and have more credibility;
- It is also vital to have properly trained staff with a range of professional expertise;
- It helps for projects to be locked into wider support systems rather than being standalone initiatives;
- Most programmes tackle ideology as a secondary issue, especially in the EU;
- Most practitioners believe it is possible to tackle different forms of extremism through the same processes, with amendments to specific circumstances;
- Programmes need to be tailored to the individual;
- Projects tend to take a rounded and holistic approach, rather than focusing on one aspect, such as ideology or social support;

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[129] Adapted from D. Elaine Pressman, *Risk Assessment Decision for Violent Political Extremism*, Report by Public Safety Canada (2009), p. 24. Available online at http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cor/rep/_fl/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf.

- It can be helpful for projects and programmes to be seen as independent of the state;
- Support needs to be consistent and long-term;
- Projects need to address a participant's social as well as individual needs – projects need to consider family and social networks, too.[130]

While well-conceived policy interventions by the state and by civil society can achieve positive results in bringing radicalised young people back from the brink of extremism and terrorism, we should also not lose sight of the fact that the process of disengagement is often brought about without the help of social workers or religious counselling. Many terrorist groups disengage rather quickly due to the combined force of circumstances that have nothing to do with specific de-radicalisation programmes. According to data from the Global Terrorism Database of the University of Maryland, almost three out of four (74.72%) terrorist groups in the period 1970 - 1997 did not survive their first year of operations; less than fifteen percent (14.77%) lasted 1 - 5 years, less than five percent (4.62%) lasted 6 - 10 years, less than five percent (4.62%) lasted 11 - 20 years and only 1.26 percent lasted – like al-Qaeda – more than twenty years.[131]

One crucial element for the survival of a terrorist group is a secure source of funding; another is outside support – for example by a state or a diaspora abroad.[132] While these are difficult to control for governments fighting terrorism, there is another factor that could be controlled: counter-productive CT measures – policies and activities taken by governments that are based on wishful-thinking, lessons from the past that are no longer applicable in present circumstances, and a dubious, military-dominated approach to CT. Perhaps most important is to prevent teaming up with foreign and domestic partners in the fight against terrorism who lack credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of those who are in need of de-radicalisation, the radical milieu, the wider constituency which the terrorists try to appeal to, and other relevant domestic and foreign audiences.

An Interim Conclusion

In the end, de-radicalisation too remains a much more elusive concept than is generally assumed. John Horgan and Max Taylor found that '[d]e-radicalisation is a misleading term to encompass what are context-specific and culturally determined efforts to reduce the risk of involvement or re-engagement in terrorism'.[133] In a text coauthored with Kurt Braddock, John Horgan concluded:

Despite the highly publicized claims for success associated with some of these risk reduction initiatives, there are major barriers to even the most tentative of evaluations:
1. There are no explicit criteria for success associated with any initiative;
2. There is little data associated with any of these initiatives that can be reliably corroborated independently;
3. There has been no systematic effort to study any aspect of these programs, even individually, let alone collectively.[134]

In his more recent writings, John Horgan's focus has shifted away from 'de-radicalisation' terminology to the more general notion of 'Terrorist Risk Reduction Programmes' given that 'reducing the risk of involvement (or re-engagement) in terrorism is the one clear common feature of all such initiatives.'[237]

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[130] Institute for Strategic Dialogue, *Tackling Extremism: De-Radicalisation and Disengagement* (Copenhagen: Conference Report, 8-9 May 2012), pp. 22-3.

[131] G. LaFree (2010), op. cit. in *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 4, No. 1.

[132] Laurie Fenstermacher (2011), op. cit. (note 11), p. 11.

[133] John Horgan and Max Taylor, (2011) op. cit. (note 221), pp. 183, 184, 186.

[134] John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 'Rehabilitating the Terrorists?: Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalisation Programs', *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 22 (2010), pp. 285-6. [237]

John Horgan and Mary Beth Altier, 'The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalization Programs', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (Summer/Fall 2012), pp. 88-9; John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, (2010) op. cit. (note 237), pp. 267-91.

This is a good way of approaching the subject as it raises the question: what are the risk factors that make individuals and groups more likely to engage in acts of political terrorism? These risk factors are generally culturespecific, and differ for example, between diaspora situations and conflict zones. Where (young) people have alternative forms of expressing grievances and dissent, where they have other and better occupational options than joining an armed, underground organisation, the appeal of terrorism is likely to be smaller. The presence of violent entrepreneurs armed with a simple but persuasive ideology (and some cash and often empty promises) is, on the other hand, likely to increase the chances that a terrorist nucleus can be formed. Different personality types (entrepreneurs, protégés, misfits, drifters) join a terrorist group for different reasons and counterradicalisation measures might well make use of different types of appeals that are likely to be successful for different types of people.[135] Offering young people alternative identification objects and role models and thereby the possibility to develop a different and positive identity is a road that needs to be explored more thoroughly.

The term 'de-radicalisation' is, as mentioned earlier, generally avoided by governments when it comes to winning back the 'hearts and minds' of those who became violent radicals, violent extremists or terrorists. The Global Counterterrorism Forum (a new multilateral forum consisting of 30 member states spearheaded by the US and Turkey) used, in its recent *Rome Memorandum*, the terminology of 'Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders'[136] as did the Roundtable Expert Meeting and Conference on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders, co-organised by ICCT – The Hague and UNICRI, in their paper *Core Principles & Good Practices*. The fact that the paper was not termed 'Lessons Learned and Best Practices' indicates, however, that it is not yet possible to evaluate existing practices comparatively. So far, our current knowledge is largely founded on the basis of fragmentary research, and experiences and insights from the field – despite the growing attention paid to the topic through such international initiatives.[137]

Based on the above, the conclusion is unavoidable that knowledge about de-radicalisation programmes is at this stage still very fragmented and uneven, which makes the comparative evaluation of various local initiatives an almost impossible task. External, in-depth evaluations of individual country programmes or detailed comparative evaluations of a rigorous sort do not yet seem to exist in the available literature (and it is very doubtful that they exist at all).[138] Investment in evaluation studies is still considered a luxury in some quarters and an impossibility in others. As a consequence, too much of what we think we know is still built on sand and lacks solid foundations for policy recommendations. However a great deal of research is under way to improve the situation.

Focus on (Preventative) Counter-Radicalisation

While a growing amount of research has been conducted on radicalisation and, to a lesser extent, deradicalisation, we know even less about counter-radicalisation – what works, what does not. Part of the problem is again that results are hard to measure: have terrorist attacks been prevented because counter-radicalisation risk reduction

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[135] For a description of these categories of terrorist cell members, see Petter Nesser, *Jihad in Europe: Patterns in Islamist terrorist cell formation and behaviour, 1995-2010* (Oslo: University of Oslo PhD Thesis, 2012), pp. 527-32.

[136] Global Counterterrorism Forum, R*ome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders* (Rome: GCTF, 2012). Available online at http://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/19594/Rome+Memorandum+on+Good+Practices+for+Rehabilitation+and+Reintegration+of+Violent+Extremist+Offenders.

[137] International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, *Roundtable Expert Meeting & Conference on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders. Core Principles & Good Practices,* Background Paper (The Hague: February 2012), p. 2. Three recommendations were made in the paper: (i) 'any effort to rehabilitate and reintegrate violent extremist offenders should be holistic, culture-specific and tailored to the relevant contexts and individuals', (ii) 'in order to be successful it is imperative that any rehabilitation effort is embedded in a coherent, well organised institutional infrastructure' and (iii) 'it is critical to be sensitive to achievements and lessons in the past, present and future, as well as experience in different areas (e.g. in Disarmament, Demobilisation & Reintegration processes in post-conflict situations) and with different types of violent offenders (e.g. prison gangs).' Ibid., pp. 14-5. Available online at http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Background-Paper-Rehab-Core-Principles-Good-Practices.pdf.

[138] Horgan and Altier concluded in mid-2012: 'Although the past few years have seen some reports attempting to compare various programs, these comparisons typically fail to identify anything beyond the most public and superficial features of the programs, neglecting

programmes have worked? Or were there only a few or no plots and attempts to launch a terrorist campaign to begin within a given period and country-specific context?

The problem of 'home-grown' Jihadist terrorism was for a number of years considered to be a European problem in the US, where Muslim diaspora communities are smaller; they were assumed to be better integrated and generally much more affluent than in Western Europe. However, with some time lag, and after approximately fifty failed, foiled and successful attacks by Muslims in America, the US also face the problem of home-grown terrorism, particularly from Muslim students, refugee communities, second generation immigrants and converts to Islamism.[242] Hence, there is, in the Western world at least, a partial shift of focus from de-radicalisation of detained and imprisoned terrorist suspects to preventive work in the local and foreign communities from which the terrorists – more often lone wolfs, less often 'bunch of guys' – emerge.

While de-radicalisation refers to programmes that are generally focusing on radicalised individuals or groups of suspected or convicted terrorists with the aim of rehabilitating them and re-integrating them into society or at least dissuading them from further use of political violence, counter-radicalisation has an anticipatory thrust. It seeks to prevent members from non-radicalised populations from being radicalised without the use of heavy-handed coercive or repressive means as these are thought to be possibly counter-productive.[243] Following a proposal made by John Horgan, counter-radicalisation has been defined by the UN CTITF as:

> Policies and programmes aimed at addressing some of the conditions that may propel some individuals down the path to terrorism. It is used broadly to refer to a package of social, political, legal, educational and economic programmes specifically designed to deter disaffected (and possibly already radicalised) individuals from crossing the line and becoming terrorists.[244]

The main focus of counter-radicalisation efforts is therefore not the terrorists themselves but rather the strengthening and empowering of the community from which they might emerge and which might, if neglected, be deemed potentially supportive of them. The underlying idea is that the local diaspora communities in the West should be as interested as the host government in keeping their neighbourhoods free of violent extremists. To achieve this goal of preventing the emergence of terrorism, capacity-building to make a targeted community more resilient is often recommended.[245] Advocates of counter-radicalisation programmes in relation to violent Islamism propose steps like the following:

- Expand focus from violent to non-violent extremism;
- Empower mainstream Muslim voices;
- Address local grievances, not global ones;
- Rejuvenate efforts to promote prosperity, reform and democracy in Arab countries;

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an analysis of the metrics, methodologies, and actual data necessary for systematic evaluation'. John Horgan and Mary Beth Altier, 'The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalization Programs', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (Summer/Fall 2012), p. 86.

[242]   John Mueller (Ed.), *Terrorism since 9/11: The American Cases,* (Columbus, Ohio: Mershon Center, June 2012). Available online at: http://politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/since.html

[243]   United States Bipartisan Policy Center, National Security Preparedness Group, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America* (Washington DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, June 2011), Box 1: Definitions – Key Terms and Concepts.

[244]   United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, *First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism,* New York (UN/CTITF: September 2008). Available online at http://www.un.org/terrorism/pdfs/radicalisation.pdf. [245] United States Bipartisan Policy Center, (June 2011) op. cit. (note 243), p. 1 (Executive Summary).

- Portray the al-Qaeda threat realistically and emphasize the group's bankrupt ideology;
- Employ nuanced, non-combative rhetoric;
- Challenge extremists in cyberspace;
- Broaden Muslim outreach.[139]

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[139] Washington Institute for Near East Policy Presidential Task Force on Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism, *Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counterterrorism* (Washington, DC. Washington Institute, March 2009), pp. 13-8.

On a more generic level, a recent report from the American Bipartisan Policy Centre defined the objectives of counter-radicalisation in terms of three opposing core dynamics of radicalisation – grievances, ideology and mobilisation:

- *Counter-grievance*: If violent extremists aim to exploit grievances, real or perceived, one of the core objectives of counter-radicalisation is to address these grievances or the perception thereof;
- *Counter-ideology*: If violent extremists seek to promote extremist narratives and make their ideology resonate, the purpose of counter-radicalisation is to expose and counter such ideas, educate communities and thereby strengthen their defences against the extremists' narrative; and empower community leaders to speak out against violent extremists and their ideas;
- *Counter-mobilization*: If violent extremists attempt to form cells and recruit followers, the objective of counter-radicalisation is to help communities build networks, knowledge, and 'tools' that can be used to challenge and resist such attempts.[140]

Part of countering violent extremism involves countering the ideology underlying extremism. In this regard, work done at the Consortium for Strategic Communication (Arizona State University) breaks new ground. The team consisting of Angela Tretheway, Steven R. Corman and the late Bud Goodall identified four functions of ideology – naturalising, obscuring, universalising and structuring – and then proposed interfering with each of these functions:

- Naturalising means turning socially constructed, politically-motivated, and fluid ideas into taken-forgranted assumptions, beliefs, and meanings. Doing so makes them seem fixed, objective, and 'naturally occurring'. To undermine naturalising CT policies can focus on challenging assumptions, beliefs, and meanings behind an ideology;
- Obscuring is denying or hiding contradictions in ongoing systems of meaning, making them seem to be seamless, coherent, and unified worldviews. To fight obscuring CT policies can target contradictions, pushing them into the open;
- Universalising means presenting the interests or concerns of those in power as the interests of all group members. To target universalizing CT policies can engage subgroups and their leaders, politicising the differences in interests that ideology tries to smooth over;
- Structuring involves creating rules and resources in a social system that preserves an ideology. To resist structuring CT policies can place stress on the structures and/or promote alternatives that might replace, undermine, or circumvent them.[141]

Since the US encountered the problem of 'home-grown' Islamist terrorism later than Western Europe, some of its CT policymakers have looked to Europe for guidance. There they found a very diverse set of activities under the label of counter-radicalisation being tried in countries like the UK, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands – activities like:

- Interfaith meetings;
- The creation of Muslim magazines and TV;
- Government-sponsored lectures from moderate Muslim clerics;
- Field trips to Auschwitz;
- Professional development seminars;
- Soccer matches with police officers;

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[140] United States Bipartisan Policy Center, (June 2011), pp. 17-8, italics added by author.

[141] Angela Tretheway, Steven R. Corman and Bud Goodall, *Out of Their Heads and Into Their Conversation: Countering Extremist Ideology* (Arizona State University: Consortium for Strategic Communication: Report No. 0902, 14 September 2009), Executive Summary. See also Jeffry R. Halverson, H.L. Goodall, Jr. and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

- Development of tools/measures to better enable teachers and public authorities to address radical and negative opinions;

- Establishment of a national idea catalogue of counter measures, including preventative measures (jointly produced by different actors);

- Establishment of a helpdesk to which public authorities and public actors can turn for information on radicalisation and effective methods;

- Creation of a mentoring system for young people to establish face-to-face dialogue and the existence of resource individuals and role models; counteract distribution of radical material via TV, CD-ROM, books and the Internet;

- Dialogue forums aimed at disseminating information on foreign policy in the Muslim world;

- Courses for citizens on rights and duties of citizenship and democratic principles;

- Education programmes on extremism for correctional treatment staff;

- Development of awareness training for individuals who work with young people to enable easier identification of radicalisation indicators.[142]

After having reviewed some of the European programmes for the prevention of radicalisation, Lorenzo Vidino formulated some advice for the problems the US faces with home-grown radicalisation. His recommendations covered ten points:

1. Know your client. No counter-radicalisation program can be effective without a deep knowledge of the 'targeted' community and the process that leads some in it to radicalise;

2. Be flexible: No single approach will work in all cases and everywhere – and, in many cases, no solution at all will work. What sways one individual might leave another unfazed;

3. Set clear metrics: It is imperative for a program to establish from day one what it seeks to achieve. In particular, the program must determine whether it seeks to target simply violent individuals or, more broadly, the intellectual framework of radicalism that might (or might not) give rise to violent behaviour;

4. Choose many partners: Working with the Muslim community is critical. Yet, given its fragmentation and lack of unified leadership, finding partners is no easy endeavour. Government cooperation with nonviolent Islamists, such as offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood and political Salafi groups, is particularly controversial;

5. Work at the local level: Europeans have learned that, though central government can provide general guidelines and funds, actual counter-radicalisation work is done at the local level;

6. Trained personnel are key: A network of competent law enforcement officials, social workers, teachers, and community leaders is considered the best front-line defence against radicalisation;

7. Play down counterterrorism: security services have to be involved – but their visibility must be minimal; 8. Be open: Consult with academics, civil liberties organisations – anybody with expertise. Inform the public. Get feedback from the Muslim community (and not just its most vocal self-appointed leaders);

9. Find ways to evaluate success and failure: Finding ways to empirically measure results might be the only way to manage external expectations and maintain the program;

10. Have a thick skin: Given the difficulty of measuring its success and the controversial actions that must be taken to implement it, a counter-radicalisation program is likely to be the subject of widespread criticism. The most immediate critics will include Islamists, conservatives, and civil libertarians. Policymakers must keep in mind that, despite all the mistakes they are bound to make and the setbacks they will experience, a counter-radicalisation program is a necessary component of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.[250]

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[142] Lorenzo Vidino, 'Toward a Radical Solution', *Foreign Policy* (5 January 2010); Magnus Ranstorp, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation and Terrorism* (Stockholm: Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies, 2009), pp. 20-1. [250] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

These are all valuable observations that should be heeded. However, four are especially important – items (1) [Know your client], (4) [Choose many partners], (5) [Work at the local level] and (6) [Trained personnel are key].
While many of the counter-radicalisation activities are very context-specific, there are two policy choices that have to be made wherever authorities engage in such policies of prevention and counter-radicalisation:

1. Which partners in the local community do you choose for collaboration?
2. What objective should one aim for?[143]

With regard to the first, in the past, some government agencies (especially in the UK, but to some extent also in Germany) have chosen those from the community as local partners who seemed best-organised and/or had the strongest voices. When countering violent Islamism, some Western governments have selected partners that often turned out not to be representative of moderate, mainstream Muslims at all but were sometimes found to be linked to extremist networks abroad. Without being representative of the Muslim mainstream in the diaspora, they used – and in many places continue to use – their position as interlocutors with the host government to strengthen their grip on the local community. Unwittingly, some dubious Islamists have been mistaken as bona fide Muslim leaders and have been empowered by being accepted as partners. Often they turned out to be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. To find legitimate, influential, effective and representative partners in Muslim communities has become a major challenge for community liaison officers linked to Western governments.[144]

The second policy choice refers to the question which groups to focus attention on: people already on the path of becoming violent extremists or those who mingle mainly with non-violent extremists. There has been a gradual realisation in some quarters (e.g. in the UK) that it is not enough to focus on those attracted to those who advocate violence; instead it is mandatory to broaden the focus of counter-radicalisation measures and target all who oppose Western-style democracy, secular rule and other core values of our societies. However, as the number of violent extremists has grown in recent years, capacities of governments to deal with all extremists have often become overstretched. As a consequence, in practice many so-called non-violent extremists still get away with virulent anti-Western rhetoric and subversive activities.

Here the crucial question is: do so-called 'non-violent extremists' not constitute the dangerous, radical milieu which home-grown terrorists require to be ideologically and materially supported in their efforts to bring Jihad to the West? Are organisations of non-violent extremists 'conveyor belts' to terrorism or do they, on the contrary, act as a 'firewall' – preventing some young hotheads from embracing Jihad in favour of missionary work for Salafism? The evidence on that question whether or not non-violent extremist organisations serve as 'gateway' to terrorism is, for lack of research, still out but an answer is urgently needed.[145] Countering all extremism or countering only violent extremism has now become the crucial question for CT policymakers in the West.

Whether or not one should partner with militant Islamists is still disputed and complicated by the fact that some of them are extremists while others are 'only' radical or merely 'activist'. The issue is of relevance on the home front and abroad. In the US, the Obama administration has strengthened ties with the Muslim Brotherhood both at home and in Egypt. The wisdom of this policy can be questioned in light of recent developments in Egypt. However, at the moment the main focus of Western governments seems to be on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) only.

CVE has been contrasted with the Global War on Terror (GWOT) of the Bush Jr. administrations. In many ways, CVE is a more useful concept although there is still dispute about its exact contours. This makes the design, execution and ultimately the evaluation of CVE programmes difficult. CVE has emerged in recent years as a 'soft

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[143] United States Bipartisan Policy Center, National Security Preparedness Group, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America* (Washington DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, June 2011), pp. 1-2.
[144] Laurie Fenstermacher, 'Executive Summary', in Sarah Canna (Ed.), *Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats: Current Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counter-radicalisation and Disengagement* (College Park, Md.: START, January 2011), p. 10.
[145] Ibid*.*, p. 10.
[254] Ibid., p. 7.

power', non-coercive approach to countering terrorism. The goal is prevention by trying to 'eliminate or minimize those factors that lead individuals to join violent extremist organisations or to support such groups'.[254]

CVE is aimed at reducing the number of terrorist supporters in the radical milieu and the wider constituency which the terrorists attempt to reach – the Ummah in the case of Salafi Jihadists. CVE is focusing on these rather than directly on the terrorists themselves.[146] In this sense, it is an indirect strategy.

A number of CVE policies and programmes have been implemented on national levels (e.g. in the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark) and on city-levels (e.g. in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Berlin, Birmingham, London and Paris). Are these successful? There are some indications that point in this direction, for example in the Netherlands, but at this stage it is premature to draw final conclusions. As a recent (2012) publication on local policies with regard to engaging with Islamic extremism in five European cities concluded: 'The actual (and independent) evaluation of the policies is still to come.'[147]

Yet, despite this uncertainty about the effectiveness of various policy measures, countering (violent) extremism is a vital part of CT. Since CVE is persuasive rather than coercive by nature, it is less likely to do harm than heavy-handed and irreversible CT measures through military forces. Sometimes, policy measures have to be taken even if their effects are uncertain, as doing nothing would probably be more costly in the end. However, evaluation studies should accompany such policy measures rather than follow them.

The too exclusive focus on radicalisation and de-radicalisation on the micro-level has kept us from looking at the wider picture on the meso-level – namely the radical milieu of so-called non-violent extremists who are far from harmless. It has also prevented an analysis of phenomena on the macro-level of how CT and other policies of Western democracies are perceived in the Arab and Muslim world in general, and by Islamist terrorists and their supporters in the radical milieu and local diasporas in particular.

Despite its weaknesses, the concept of radicalisation should not be abandoned. However, it should, as argued above, be extended to changes in attitude and behaviour on both sides of a conflict dyad. On the other hand, the analysis must also be extended beyond the micro-level. Such a broadened focus will also take away some of the burden of proof now placed on individual radicalisation analyses: too much focus has been placed on 'vulnerable youth' that must be saved from recruitment into terrorism while the study of higher-level inter-group processes might bring us further.

On the conceptual level, it would make sense to differentiate more explicitly between radicalism and extremism. Radicalisation has been linked with political radicalism but historically radicalism is less of a problem for democracies than extremism. Radicalism could be accommodated in the past in democratic systems because it has been mostly open-minded and pragmatic whereas extremism, especially when linked to religion, has closed the door to rational inquiry because the true believer thinks (s)he is already in possession of all the answers and there is only one solution to the problem. Intolerance and self-righteousness make these persons a threat to others who do not wish to submit to their dictates.

In the past, much effort has been put into profiling terrorists. Since most terrorists are 'normal' in a clinical (but not moral) sense, this has not been an overly useful approach. However, contrary to terrorists, extremists can be profiled more easily. We can analyse their speech acts by looking at their past and present discourses, both those held in public (and on the internet) and, where possible, also those held behind closed doors when they meet among themselves. Since extremism in politics can be measured in relation to views held by the majority of the population of a political community, it is possible to find the extent to which extremists reject its core values – in the case of Western societies: democracy, (gender) equality, pluralism, separation of state and religion, freedom of thought and expression, equality of opportunity, man-made laws, adherence to a constitution and the rule of law, respect for human rights and humanitarian law, and respect for and responsibility, towards minorities.

The second test of extremism identified in this study is related to the terrorists' propensity to prefer, in their will to power and on their paths to realise their political programmes: (i) the use of force/violence over persuasion; (ii) uniformity over diversity; (iii) collective goals over individual freedoms; and (iv) giving orders over

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[146] William McCants, *Countering Violent Extremism. Part 1: Definition* (Jihadica: 24 February 2012). Available online at www.jihadica.com/countering-violent-extremism-pt-1-definition/; accessed 24 February 2012. McCant's minimal definition of CVE is: 'Reducing the number of terrorist group supporters through non-coercive means' (Ibid.).

[147] Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk, *Engaging with Violent Islamic Extremism in Western European Cities*, (The Hague, Eleven International Publishing & FORUM Institute for Multicultural Affairs, 2012), p. 14.

engaging in dialogue. Where their speech acts give clear indications that they reject most Western core values and meet the four criteria that distinguish extremists from mainstream democrats, alarm bells should sound and the behaviour of those who violate these norms should be subject to closer scrutiny and, if necessary, corrective policies. Where to draw the line between non-violent extremism and violent extremism is a policy question that needs to be discussed and evaluated in each national context.

The relatively 'open' societies of Western democracies still leave plenty of room for radicalism as opposed to extremism. In the past, radicalism has reformed our political systems, allowing fringe movements to become mainstream movements. Radicalism is often constructive and a certain level of it is necessary for the renewal of our political, economic and social systems. Extremism, on the other hand, is divisive and destructive. It comes in secular and religious forms and some variants of Islamism are extremist in their religious supremacism and dangerous in their penchant for Jihad – they threaten the way of life of citizens and denizens in open societies.

The distinction between extremism and radicalism which has been proposed here is one that requires further exploration. While both share the position that they are at some distance from the political centre of a society or the status quo, they differ in their willingness to engage in rational dialogue and ultimately in the transparency and legality of their activities. Can radical militants become fanatical extremists and can closedminded extremists become open-minded radicals or even moderates? We need to look more carefully at differences – both in ideas and actions – between activists, militants, radicals, extremists and terrorists and what emotions and policies trigger cross-over processes between these types of actors in either direction.

The exploration of situations in which such cross-over conversions happen (e.g. in prison, after a peace agreement) is of paramount importance, as is the study of the degree of support or rejection which militants receive by relevant sectors of society. Researchers should be aware that it is not only rational choices that are involved here but also individual arousal or collective waves of emotions triggered by traumatic experiences and major events. The relationship between so-called non-violent and violent extremists also warrants further scrutiny. Do the former serve as 'conveyor belts' for some to become extremists and terrorists or are non-violent extremist groups, on the contrary, a repository that provides a home for those who might otherwise have become terrorists?

Conclusion

This literature review and terminological discussion on radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation and related concepts has not so much been substantive, in terms of comparing the CT efforts of various countries, than it has been conceptual in nature. Having taken a closer look at the literature, it has become clear that the lack of conceptual clarity is one of the major obstacles – in addition to, for instance, data availability and politicisation – standing in the way of reaching cumulative and comparable research findings from which broadly valid policy recommendations can be drawn. The answers that we have from various types of research are in many cases less than solid. Eight questions were identified where there is a fairly solid body of answers; seven others where our knowledge is thin and in need to be solidified by more evidence-based empirical research.

This paper found that the number of push and pull factors which can lead to radicalisation on the microlevel is very large – the same is true for the factors which can impact on de-radicalisation and disengagement. However, most findings are derived from small samples and few case studies, making comparison and generalisations problematic, and findings provisional. It is difficult to say what works and what does not work in general or what is even counter-productive when it comes to de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation. Local context matters very much. At this stage, we still lack rigorous evaluations that allow us to determine the relative merits of various policies with a high degree of certainty.

In the following, this paper limits itself to summarising various policy recommendations proposed by experts, some based on 'good enough' research and others based on experiences of what is merely 'perceived' by experts as being right.[148] For tapping into the collective wisdom of the experts, I rely strongly on insights and

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[148] Alex P. Schmid (Ed.) (2011), op. cit. pp. 29-38 and Sarah Canna (Ed.) (2011), op. cit., pp. 10-6. Additional sources utilised are: Michael B. Kraft and Edward Marks, *US. Government Counterterrorism: A Guide to Who Does What*, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2012), pp. 53-73; Findings from a September 2005 RAND Initiative for Middle Eastern Youth in Washington DC. Available online at

recommendations from nearly hundred experts from more than twenty countries, who answered a lengthy questionnaire that also formed part of the input for the *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, which I edited in 2011. Combining the findings of the present policy brief and those contained in the answers of experts for the Handbook, provides us with the following non-exhaustive list.

Findings and Recommendations for Countering Violent Extremism

I. General Counter-Radicalisation Policies

1. Both radicalism and extremism can only be understood in terms of their distance from status quo or mainstream positions on the political spectrum of a given society. Having said that, it makes sense, nevertheless, to distinguish between radicalism and extremism on the basis of the historical record of both phenomena. Radicalism is far less problematic for a democratic society than extremism, as genuine radicals tend to be more pragmatic and open to critical reasoning. Radicals can be reformist and nonviolent, while extremists tend to be closed-minded, intolerant, anti-democratic and ready to use all means, including deception, to reach their goals.[149] While the Western traditions of freedom of thought and expression can accommodate radical thought (but not necessarily all types of radical action), there is no real compromise possible with closed-minded extremists. Whenever extremism raises its head in the form of pushing a political agenda against Western core values due to its preference for: (i) force/violence over persuasion; (ii) uniformity over diversity; (iii) collective goals over individual freedoms and (iv) giving order over seeking dialogue, our alarm bells should go off. The main problem then, is radicalisation to extremism, not to radicalism. Radicalisation in the form of social mobilisation and collective action is a fairly normal occurrence whenever a political system becomes blocked on some burning public issue. In well-functioning democracies this usually takes place without major escalations to violence. When a political system is permanently blocked as in dictatorships and under other authoritarian systems, radicalisation to political violence must be judged differently than in open societies. Radicalisation processes in closed societies dominated for generations by a small authoritarian elite unwilling to allow political change cannot be equated with radicalisation in open, democratic societies where peaceful change is always possible.

2. Most of the literature sees radicalisation as a one-sided phenomenon, not realising that it can take place in a polarised conflict relationship on both sides of a conflict dyad. Another shortcoming is that there is, in a large part of the literature, an unfortunate tendency to equate radicalism with extremism and both with terrorism while at the same time using the term 'terrorism' as shorthand label for political violence in general.

3. Three levels of analysis in research on the root causes of terrorism have been identified, with a certain fixation of much of the current research on the micro-level (vulnerable individuals, indoctrinated over the Internet or in physical locations and/or recruited by terrorist organisations). More analyses on the meso-

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www.rand.org/international_programs/cmepp/imey/projects/de-radicalisation.html); accessed 14 March 2010; Angel Rabasa, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez and Christopher Boucek, *Deradicalising Islamist Extremists*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010), pp. xx-xxi; Alex P. Schmid, 'Twelve Rules for Preventing and Countering Terrorism', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (August 2012), p. 77; United States Bipartisan Policy Center National Security Preparedness Group, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America* (Washington DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, June 2011), pp. 1-2.

[149] There is some disagreement in the literature as to whether or not radicals can be reformist. As Mark Sedgwick writes: 'one may contrast radicalism with reformism, when reformism is understood, following the Mexican intellectual Octavio Paz, as the desire to 'leave the social or cultural structures intact and […] only […] limit or improve this or that procedure' and radicalism is understood as the desire 'to correct the uses themselves rather than the mere abuses of them.' M. Sedgwick (2010), op. cit.(note 25), p. 482. Yet historically, there have been many radicals who were reformist, e.g. the suffragettes.

and macro-levels is needed.[150] The study of individual and small group radicalisation has to some extent become a substitute for a fuller exploration of the causes of terrorist violence which also have to be sought in the 'radical milieu' (which includes so-called non-violent extremists) and in governmental and alliance policies at home and abroad and how these affect disadvantaged minorities and influences some of their members to opt for legitimate forms of resistance and others to opt for terrorism.

4. It is recommended that governments should strengthen public resilience to extremism across the board. They should not only focus on those already on the path to violent extremism or those being subjected to terrorist recruitment. Governments should go beyond that and make certain sub-cultures in society more resilient to the allure of terrorism.

5. It is important to de-glamourise terrorism and counter the attraction that some terrorist groups seem to enjoy by countering their extremist narratives with a clear and credible counter-narrative that has a broad appeal, including for those who might otherwise fall for the terrorists' narrative;

6. It is important to de-legitimise the methods and goals of terrorist leaders and their supporters and undermine their capacity to inspire others to follow their example.

7. It is important to challenge and, if warranted, correct the grievances professed by terrorist and extremist groups and counter the attribution of guilt for (perceived) injustices to the side of democratic governments.

II. Domestic Counter-radicalisation Policies

8. It is important to propagate and demonstrate good governance and develop inclusive institutions that can provide for peaceful, gradual, reformist social and political flexibility and change.

9. It is crucial to strengthen and maintain a strong sense of legitimacy among the public regarding the fairness of the judicial and the political system.

10. It is highly advisable to stimulate government dialogue and cooperation with responsible and mainstream representatives of immigrant communities and their religious institutions; but it is crucial to be careful in choosing representative community partners and not persons which are linked to front organisations of foreign extremists.

11. It is vital to enhance social cohesion by integrating members from immigrant communities in order to prevent the emergence of a radical milieu that is likely to facilitate the growth of violent extremism and ultimately terrorism.

12. The separation of church and state prevalent in the West has made governments hesitant to interfere with people's beliefs. This reluctance to have a critical look at the political uses and abuses of religion has been exploited by political entrepreneurs sailing under a religious flag. However, governments should not allow violent extremists and sects to claim and abuse privileges traditionally granted to bona fide peaceful religions.

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[150] The meso-level of analysis covers what Clark McCauley terms 'Group Radicalisation' as well as 'Mass Radicalisation - although the latter already blends into the macro-level of analysis. See Sections 2 and 3 of Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), pp. 95-148 and 149-92 respectively.

13. It is important to enhance resilience among immigrant communities to counter terrorism by capacitybuilding and by empowering mainstream representatives *vis-à-vis* extremist voices in diasporas.

III. Communication Policies

14. Governments and media should be more aware that both verbal rhetoric and non-verbal signalling matter; greater care should be taken in the use of language and other symbols in public discourse and in all counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism communication efforts.

15. It is vital to neutralise extremist indoctrination efforts by preventing and countering hate speech, extremist propaganda and ill-founded conspiracy theories in the public sphere and on the Internet.

16. Government and civil society should encourage the media and Internet providers not to give terrorists and their supporters free access to publicity in return for producing atrocities; editors and other gatekeepers in the media and on the internet ought to reconsider some of their news values in the light of the fact that publicity is the lifeblood of terrorism and that terrorist violence primarily serves to access the news system to intimidate or otherwise influence targeted audiences. Instead of solely following a repressive, take-websites-down approach, governments and civil society actors should try to engage with extremists online to counter the violent extremist narrative.

IV. Foreign Policy

17. Governments should be aware of the many benefits of a prudent foreign policy; carrying a big stick in foreign policy provokes resistance and might also give rise to terrorism. 'Soft power' approaches are generally preferable to the display of military might which should only be a weapon of last resort.

18. Governments should be aware that military measures without legitimisation by regional or international organisations and without credible political solutions to follow up armed intervention are likely to foster higher levels of violence.

19. Governments need to sort out better politics and ethics: support for democracy, support for stability, support for peace and justice and support for human rights do not always go hand in hand. Publicly defendable choices and prioritisation have to be made on a case by case basis.

20. It cannot be emphasised enough how important it is for government officials to do what they say and say what they do – there should be no credibility gap between declaratory policy and actual policy; also double standards must be avoided at all costs if policies want to retain credibility.

21. Governments should strive to work towards improvements in the human condition everywhere and assist wherever possible in strengthening human security for all.

22. Governments and non-governmental organisations should engage and cooperate in efforts to build international consensus to delegitimise extremists and their ideologies.[151]

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[151] These recommendations are based on various sources. The main source consists of the responses of 91 experts from more than twenty countries; see: A.P. Schmid (Ed.) (2011), op. cit., pp. 29-38. Other sources utilised are: Michael B. Kraft and Edward Marks, *U.S. Government Counterterrorism. A Guide to Who Does What* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2012), pp. 53-73; L. Fenstermacher, summarising various articles in Sarah Canna (Ed.), op. cit. (note 11), pp.10-16; Findings from a September 2005 RAND Initiative for Middle Eastern Youth in Washington

23. Governments should promote the rule of law and good governance as an instrument of foreign policy in general; this is helpful in terms of promoting economic progress but most likely also in terms of countering violent extremism and terrorism.

While many of these recommendations may sound idealistic and/or academic (they are, after all, in part based on suggestions from academic experts), most of them are broadly consistent with the declaratory policies in government circles. If we compare these recommendations with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy of 2006,[152] we find that many of the points can also be found there in one formulation or another. However, the implementation of the Global Strategy in all the UN Member States has been an altogether different matter: it is a costly, time-consuming process and limited by the absence of capacity and political will in many states as well as handicapped by the lack of a universally accepted legal definition of terrorism.[262]

Two Major Gaps in Current Counter-Radicalisation Efforts

Finally, as mentioned above, two major gaps in current policies ought to be highlighted. Firstly, willingness to look more critically at the role of the media and the internet is notably absent in current counterterrorism efforts in most democratic states. Respect for freedom of speech and fear of censorship are powerful obstacles to efforts to reduce terrorist and extremist access to mass media and the Internet. Both historical leaders of al-Qaeda have admitted that the main struggle for the hearts and minds takes place in the media. Bin Laden himself even noted in one of his statements:

> Terror is the most dreaded weapon in [the] modern age and Western media is mercilessly using it against its own people. It can add fear and helplessness in the psyche of the people of Europe and the United States. It means that what the enemies of the United States cannot do, its media is doing that.[263]

Recent practices of saturation coverage of terrorist atrocities have made terrorists and journalists 'strange bedfellows in a marriage of convenience', as journalist turned terrorism researcher Brigitte Nacos put it.[264] Deliberately staged public victimisations are used by terrorists to force access to the news system and obtain free publicity in their search for attention, respect, solidarity, legitimacy and, ultimately, political power. The same is true for the Internet. While freedom of thought and expression are Western core values and censorship of news is problematic, editors in the media should make a clearer distinction between events that would happen anyway and 'pseudo-events' staged for the purpose of being broadcast.[265] If the latter type of pseudo-events uses staged public violence as message generator, the media should treat this very differently from bona fide news, e.g. by shifting the perspective radically from the terrorists to the victims and by the refusal to engage in saturation coverage with endless repetitions of dramatic footage, which provides terrorists with free publicity and exaggerates the terrorists' power and intimidates many more people than the victims and their immediate surroundings. Rethinking 'news values' in the light of terrorist abuse of public communication media is still in its infancy.[266]

Secondly, a goal which has not been reached despite more than ten years of CT efforts, is the formulation of an effective counter-narrative to the single narrative of al-Qaeda and its affiliates which claim that Islam is under

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DC. (www.rand.org/inernational_programs/cmepp/ imey/projects/de-radicalisation.html); accessed 14 March 2010; Angel Rabasa, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez and Christopher Boucek, *Deradicalising Islamist Extremists* (St. Monica: RAND, 2010), pp. xx-xxi; Alex P. Schmid, 'Twelve Rules for Preventing and Countering Terrorism', *Perspectives on Terrorism,* Vol. 6, No. 3 (August 2012), p. 77; United States Bipartisan Policy Center, National Security Preparedness Group, *Preventing Violent Radicalisation in America* (Washington DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, June 2011), (Executive Summary), pp. 1-2.

[152] See A/RES/60/288; at www.un.org/terrorism/strategy-counter-terrorism.shtml. The Plan of Action, which is be implemented by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) consists of four sets of measures: (i) Measures to address the conditions conductive to the spread of terrorism; (ii) Measures to prevent and combat terrorism; (iii) Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat

attack and defensive Jihad against the West is the obligation of every Muslim.[267] At least the first part of this message is still widely accepted in Arab and Muslim countries as numerous public opinion surveys have confirmed at various points in time over the last decade.[268] The second part has received considerable (though fluctuating) verbal and financial support in various Arab and Muslim countries but, luckily, has had very few takers

terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard, and (iv) Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism. – ibid.

[262]   The full text is available online at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/60/288.

[263]   Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London: Hurst, 2005), p. 160.

[264]   Brigitte Nacos, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, 3rd Ed. (Boston: Longmans, 2010), p. 263. She explains: 'The American media and terrorists are not accomplices. However, they are involved in a symbiotic relationship in that they feed on each other: The media want dramatic, shocking, disconcerting news that keeps readers, listeners, and viewers captivated and that bolsters the circulation of the print press and the ratings of the electronic media. Terrorists need to spread their propaganda to further their ultimate political objectives. To put it differently, the news media and terrorists are not involved in a love story; they are strange bedfellows in a marriage of convenience'.

[265]   The original meaning of the word 'pseudo' in Greek is 'false, meant to deceive'. It was introduced into media analysis by Daniel J. Boorstin, 'From News Gathering to News Making: A Flood of Pseudo-Events', in James Combs et al (Eds.), *Drama in Life: The Uses of Communication in Society* (New York: Hastings House, 1976), p. 181.

[266]   A.P. Schmid & J. de Graaf, *Violence as Communication. Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media* (London: Sage, 1982); Brigitte Nacos, Y. Bloch-Elkon and R.Y. Shapiro, *Selling Fear: Counterterrorism, the Media, and Public Opinion* (Chicago: University Press, 2011).

[267]   Alex P. Schmid. 'The Importance of Countering Al-Qaeda's, Single Narrative', in E.J.A.M. Kessels (Ed.), *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives* (The Hague: National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, 2010), pp. 46-57.

[268]   Rashmi Singh and Sarah Marsden, (2011) op. cit.

on the ground. Out of a worldwide Muslim population of more than one billion people, very few have become radicalised to violent extremism and terrorism.[153] 'Very few' however, are still ten thousand or more hotheads – enough to create major trouble. One would think that al-Qaeda's message 'Islam is under attack' would receive less traction at a time when media report almost daily about Christian church burnings in Nigeria, expulsion and maltreatment of Christians in the Middle East and the use of blasphemy laws against Christians in South Asia. The claim for sole victimhood of Muslims does not stand up against closer scrutiny. Prosecution of people for their faith is unfortunately still a widespread phenomenon but not exclusive to Islam. Al-Qaeda's claim to be a defender of Muslims rings hollow. It has, for instance, not stood up to decry the genocidal attacks on African Muslims by Arab Muslims in Sudan's Darfur region. There is also convincing evidence that more than some 80 percent of the thousands of victims of al-Qaeda have, in fact, been Muslims – a fact that has still not sunken in with many people in Arab and Muslim countries.[154]

A counter-narrative to al-Qaeda's story line should, however, not limit itself to qualify and, where possible, dismiss charges made by jihadist ideologues and propagandists. Al-Qaeda's great strength has in the past been that many of its grievances were, rightly or wrongly, the (perceived) grievances of tens of millions of Muslims, especially in the Arab world. Its declared goal of ridding the Middle East of illegitimate regimes has had a broad appeal with the masses, as the Arab Spring with its revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and now Syria have shown. What the role of the Jihadists will be in the new Middle East is not yet clear and will differ from country to country. Islamists and Salafists have become the dominant political force in a number of these countries. While most of them were opposed to democracy in the past, many of them now appear to embrace it and have begun to re-consider some of their simplistic slogans like 'Islam is the solution'. Many of the Islamists have ideologically moved on and have become neo-Islamists and post-Islamists. While they have in the past often been sympathetic to al-Qaeda, the indiscriminate destructiveness of al-Qaeda has turned away large majorities of Muslims, a process that has gained strength since 2007. Younger members of some traditional Islamist movements, in particular the Muslim

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[153] Charles Kurzman, *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists* (Oxford: University Press, 2011).

[154] Robin Wright, *The Islamists are Coming. The Middle East: They've Arrived* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 23 August 2012). Available online at: http://www.wilsoncenter.org/islamists/home?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ww_08_23_12.

Brotherhood, no longer share the extremism of the older generation; they seem to have become radicals rather than extremists.

It is a great challenge for Western democracies to tune in to these developments, especially at a time when capitalism itself is (again) in crisis and the prospects for economic growth in several parts of the world are dim. The youth unemployment crisis in large parts of Europe has created a considerable reservoir of discontent and some of the disaffected young men and women are likely to be tempted by the 'philosophy of the bomb'. While terrorism, driven by hatred and aimed at destruction of the present order is nihilistic and rejected by large majorities in most parts of the world, the Western liberal capitalist narrative is nevertheless ringing hollow in the perception of many of the younger generation.

Credibility and legitimacy are core ingredients of any political narrative hoping to catch the imagination of people at home and abroad. They are also key resources in counter-radicalisation and CT. Governments need not be perfect before they can effectively engage in successful counter-radicalisation efforts. However, they have, in the eyes of domestic and foreign publics, to be markedly better than extremist parties and terrorist organisations. Political leaders need to stand on the moral high ground when it comes to fighting abuses of power, redress injustices and address popular grievances. Wherever that can be achieved at least in part, extremists and terrorists have, in the long run, no chance of success.

However, one should not forget that preventing radicalisation, controlling extremism and fighting terrorism are but some of the concerns of governments. There are other, conflicting priorities – and what is good for reducing terrorism will not always be good for the achievement of other policy goals and vice versa.

Literature on (i) Radicalisation and Recruitment, (ii) De-Radicalisation and Disengagement, and (iii) Counter-Radicalisation and Countering Violent Extremism

Compiled and selected by Alex P. Schmid and David C. Hofmann

The literature cited here is broader than the articles, book chapters, reports, edited volumes and monographs cited in the footnotes. On the other hand, for the sake of completeness, all titles from the footnotes are incorporated in this bibliography, even in those cases where they do not directly relate to one of the three categories of this bibliography.

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